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ABSTRACT

This radio transcript includes six parts of a series
"Kids and Drugs." Part one describes high school students' experience
with alcohol and drugs. Part two deals with law enforcement in
relations to marihuana and other drugs. Part three deals with
students and their drinking habits. Liquor dealers explain the
problem of sales to minors in part four. Part five covers PCP, LSD
and other hallucenogenics, and Part six covers drug education
materials and programs. (PJC)

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TRANSCRIPT:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1-4
STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS	
DRUGS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	4-5
CONFLICTING EVIDENCE ON THE SCOPE OF THE DRUG PROBLEM	5
SOME DISENCHANTMENT WITH MARIJUANA AMONG STUDENTS	5-7
CLASSIFICATIONS OF MARIJUANA USERS	7-8
NIDA ASSOCIATES DIRECTOR COMMENTS ON THE DRUG PHENOMENON Dr. Robert Peterson, associate director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse	8-9
THE READY AVAILABILITY OF MARIJUANA	9-12
OTHER FORMS OF INITIATION INTO MARIJUANA	12-13

KIDS AND DRUGS, ONE"

STUDENT: You know, people just look at me, and they'll say, you know, that person, I bet he uses those drugs, you know. And I don't like that at all, you know, because I could look at them and say, wow, I bet that person drinks three six packs of beer, you know, and I think that's just as disgusting as they think it's disgusting what I do. And you know, I don't even think of what I do is bad.

MERROW: That high school student smokes five or six joints of marijuana a day. Marijuana is illegal, but well over half our high school students have used it.

REINHARDT: Nearly one in nine high school seniors smokes it every day.

MERROW: But marijuana is not the most commonly used drug among teenagers. That dubious distinction belongs to alcohol.

I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt. And with this edition, OPTIONS IN EDUCATION begins a six part series on students and drugs.

MERROW: We hope to answer several questions. Why do kids use drugs?

REINHARDT: What are they using, and how do they get it?

MERROW: Are drugs more dangerous for kids than for adults?

REINHARDT: And what are schools and other authorities doing to teach kids about drugs.

MULLIS: We don't follow kids around in the halls. We don't follow them into the bathrooms. We don't hold their hands while they're at lunch. What we do is, if they're blantant about it, they're going to get caught.

WOMAN: We would say, well, now, how many, you know, have had a drink? And you'd see hands go up. And they'd say, well, yeah, you know, on week-ends, I mean we drink a six pack. But you know, beer: that's not alcohol. Or, yeah, we're in the pop wines and the regular wines, and we do, you know, drink a lot of that. But that's not alcohol. Beer and wine were not considered alcoholic beverages.

STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

STUDENT: The first time I really got drunk, I was about eight years old; really got really drunk. Before, on New Year's, my parents would let us have these little beers. They're like seven ounces, or something, not very much. I asked them for some whiskey. They had some Old Granddad and some Southern Comfort, plus I had beer and whiskey sours.

STUDENT: When I was a freshman, we used to get stoned constantly. It was like get up in the morning, roll a joint, go to class, get stoned after class, get stoned before dinner, get stoned after dinner, get stoned before you studied, and get stoned before I went to bed.

MERROW: I don't think I believe you.

STUDENT: It was true, really. That was when I was a freshman and a

sophomore, I guess. By the time I was a junior I got a little more serious about school, so I quit getting stoned. And I was out of circulation, and I don't know if everybody else was doing it as heavily. But when I was a freshman and sophomore, it was like that.

MERROW: Did you come to FSU not having smoked dope, or did you do it in high school?

STUDENT: I did it in high school. In high school I did more drugs besides dope. I went to a boarding school. And I can remember getting up in the morning, and there would be -- like, I'd say ten percent of the students would have eaten LSD the night before. And it was pretty crazy. And you would walk on in the day and people would be taking speed because they were so out of it from the night before, or going out into the woods and smoking some pot, you know, so they could make it through the day. I don't know how I ever made it through high school, really.

MERROW: You think that kids have to do that? Do most kids do that?

STUDENT: I don't think they do any more. My younger brothers don't. They smoke a lot of pot. But they don't even think about doing LSD the way that we did when I was in high school. I mean, I don't think it's as available. And I've asked my brother. He said he's just not interested in doing it at all.

MERROW: The newest study for the National Institute of Drug Abuse, not yet made public, reports that half of the high school seniors have used marijuana in the last year.

REINHARDT: Thirty-seven percent have smoked pot in the last month.

MERROW: That figure, 37%, was 27% only three years ago.

REINHARDT: More kids are trying marijuana at an earlier age, like these kids in Colorado.

STUDENT: I started at the beginning of my 9th grade year because it was the in-thing to do and, you know, it was a cool thing to do.

STUDENT: And everybody thought they had to try it.

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: You know, try it....

STUDENT: I started in grammar school. I did. I did.

STUDENT: I believe it.

MERROW: You're a sophomore in high school now?

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: You say you've been smoking pot for....?

STUDENT: Four or five years.

MERROW: How did you start?

STUDENT: A friend turned me on this bull.

MERROW: You were in, what, 6th grade?

STUDENT: Yeah, the summer after.

MERROW: When younger kids ask you what it's like to smoke marijuana, what do you say?

STUDENT: I told my little sister I'd beat the hell out of her if she ever tried it.

MERROW: Why?

STUDENT: I don't know. I just -- I don't really want her to get into it.

MERROW: Why not?

STUDENT: I don't know. It's a mistake. It is a mistake. I mean, I've quit.

MERROW: So you tell younger people not to do it. How about you?

STUDENT: I wouldn't let them have it. No. No, not really.

MERROW: How about you? Now, you started -- you first tried pot before you even got out of elementary school. What would you say to elementary school kids who wanted to know, wanted some dope? Would you?

STUDENT: I wouldn't let them. It's just too expensive a hobby, and it's just a drag.

STUDENT: "Hobby?"

STUDENT: Well, what else do you want to call it?

STUDENT: Habit.

STUDENT: "Habit." I call it a hobby.

MERROW: But you're saying it's just the money; it's not any scruples you have about 6th graders doing it.

STUDENT: I just don't want little kids trying it.

MERROW: And yet you smoke all the time.

STUDENT: Yeah, but not very often. I smoke maybe, what, every weekend, once in a while during the weekdays.

MERROW: How about you? Let me ask what you tell to younger kids. You're a sophomore in high school.

STUDENT: I say no. My little brother asked me if he could get high once. And I told him no, because I don't want him to go through what I did.

MERROW: How old is your little brotne?

STUDENT: Thirteen.

MERROW: What did he say when you said no?

STUDENT: He just walked off.

MERROW: Did he go get some dope somewhere else?

STUDENT: I don't know.

STUDENT: You hope not.

STUDENT: I hope not. Yeah, right, I hope not.

STUDENT: You don't want to be responsible for giving it to them, because if they get something hard and something happens to them, it's your own fault.

MERROW: All right. When junior high kids ask you, what do you say?

STUDENT: You can't really tell a kid what it's like, because maybe you never had a bad trip; maybe all of yours were good. So you can't really tell them exactly what it's like, what will and will not happen to them.

MERROW: Well, that's a no-win situation. I mean, you're saying if you tell the kids it's bad, they won't believe you and they'll try for themselves. If you tell them it's good, they'll say, hey, I want to try that too.

STUDENT: Well, I think that they should know both sides of the story before they try it.

DRUGS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

REINHARDT: Those high school sophomores don't sound particularly interested in school. Their grades are lousy, Ds and Fs, a few Cs, they told us.

MERROW: But let's not draw any hasty, comfortable conclusions about pot smokers and academic disaster.

REINHARDT: I spoke with several students in a high income suburb of Washington. Most of them care about their grades and plan to go to college.

STUDENT: Pretty much the drug use in this school I think could be represented by two curves. Like the wealthier they are, the families are, probably the more respectable they'd be, and maybe the less drug use. However the wealthier they are, the more money the kids have to go around buying drugs with.

STUDENT: People have a lot of money in this area. They find something to do, something to spend their money on. And they buy it. I don't think we have that much more a problem than any other school does, though, because if people really want to get drugs, they can get the money for it by stealing. They don't have to be rich. They can get it any way they want to.

STUDENT: Lots of times there's nothing to do. I live in a neighborhood which is pretty far away from Whitman, but it's very isolated. And I know especially during the summertime, about the only thing that people do is get high. Get high.

STUDENT: My mother just started working when I was like in 5th and 6th grade. And that's when I started smoking pot and getting into a lot of drugs. And it's like she would never be home, so my sister would bring all of her friends over, and it'd end up in big parties, and everybody would get stoned and all tripped-out, and everything. It's not to say that parents should stay home all day because of that. But it may have something to do with it.

REINHARDT: What about your own experiences with drugs?

STUDENT: Okay. I started smoking when I was in 5th grade, which is probably pretty early compared to a lot of other people. But I look at pot as sort of a phase you go through. When you start doing it, it's like "Wow, everybody does it; I'm cool now." And you go through this phase where you just start getting tired of it. That's what happened to me. I started getting more and more depressed every time I smoked pot, and I started analyzing other people and becoming more quiet. When you first do it, you start laughing a lot. And I finally really quit in 8th grade. I still do it every once in a while. But after 8th grade, I never did it, not even in school. I never do it in school. It's just -- it's something that I do when I'm by myself or just with a few friends.

REINHARDT: Then is it true that for the majority of kids, it's just a matter of going through a phase?

STUDENT: I think so, because most of the people that I've known and who've smoked pot smoke it for maybe three or four years, unless they're really into it. They smoke it for maybe three or four years and then quit.

CONFLICTING EVIDENCE ON THE SCOPE OF THE DRUG PROBLEM

REINHARDT: Marijuana use is lower among kids who are aiming towards college, but not all that much lower. Forty-seven percent of the college bound seniors smoke pot, while 52% of the kids who are not going to college say they smoke marijuana.

MERROW: Those percentages result from scientific research. If you ask the kids themselves, you get a different answer.

REINHARDT: Is there very much -- do many kids smoke pot here at this school?

STUDENT: Sure. I would say, yeah, the majority of people smoke pot in the schools, in most schools across the country.

REINHARDT: Okay. The principal here....

STUDENT: Marijuana, not pot.

REINHARDT: The principal says that the amount of smoking has gone down a lot in the last year.

STUDENT: No, I wouldn't say so. He doesn't see it. People are a little bit smarter now, getting smarter.

REINHARDT: Where do you go to smoke?

STUDENT: Excuse me.

REINHARDT: Where do you go to smoke?

STUDENT: Where do I go to smoke? Wherever. Wherever I feel comfortable.

SOME DISENCHANTMENT WITH MARIJUANA AMONG STUDENTS

MERROW: Those students smoke regularly, they say, but there are kids who tried marijuana and quit, or at least have cut way down.

REINHARDT: Do you smoke pot?

STUDENT: No, I quit about seven months ago.

REINHARDT: Why did you quit?

STUDENT: Because it'd just get me tired. It would just get me tired. It did nothing for me.

REINHARDT: Was it during school when you quit?

STUDENT: Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, it was. I had quit for long periods of time before that, but I just decided to stop it.

REINHARDT: What was happening that you were getting tired?

STUDENT: Well, it was just -- you know, I used to enjoy -- I used to enjoy getting high. I don't enjoy getting high any more. That's all. It just -- it was the same thing over and over again. You know, I just couldn't do a lot of stuff that I used to be able to do, like run. I like to run. And I just didn't want -- you know, it hindered me going in that sort of direction. That's all. And the only thing it did for me any more was just get me tired. It didn't get me high, or anything like that, any more. It just got me tired.

REINHARDT: How much did you smoke before that?

STUDENT: At the peak I'd be smoking probably about three times a day during the week. And on weekends, probably a lot more than that.

REINHARDT: Do you smoke?

STUDENT: Yes.

REINHARDT: During school?

STUDENT: Oh, I used to smoke during school last year. And I'd just -- well, I would go to math high every once in a while. And it's just sort of difficult to comprehend the teacher. And it's a little harder to really get into school when you're high. It's better if you're doing it at a time when it's not going to hinder anything that you have to do.

REINHARDT: Some kids say it helps them, that they're actually able to think better. Do you believe that?

STUDENT: Well, no, not for me. I don't believe that. I don't know. I found out that last year. I had a lot of personal problems with friends, and I found that the more I smoked, the more I was turning into myself with the problems and less turning to other people for help. And it just made me more unhappy.

REINHARDT: Those were high school students. It may surprise you to learn that there are junior high school kids who have already tried pot and quit.

MERROW: And again, it's a mistake to characterize even young pot users as juvenile delinquents.

STUDENT: Well, I just brought it up one day. My mom asked me if I'd ever tried it. It was in the summer, only about two weeks after I did it. And I said yeah, that I had tried it, and that I didn't really like it any more, so I wasn't going to do it any more. And she was glad on my decision because she knows a few people that have done it before, and she knows the problems that it can cause.

MERROW: You only mentioned your mom. Does your dad know?

STUDENT: I'm not really sure, but I think my dad knows. I think my mom told him. But my dad looks up to me, and I look up to my dad pretty well because I work with him and stuff. So he never even said anything about it to me.

REINHARDT: A junior high school student in Racine, Wisconsin.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF MARIJUANA USERS

MERROW: Who are the pot smoking kids? Well, there's really no simple answer. It's not all the kids. And those who do smoke don't smoke all the time.

REINHARDT: The largest group is kids who are curious. They're experimenting. Then there are occasional users, maybe a couple of times a year.

MERROW: Some kids smoke marijuana on weekends, though not necessarily every weekend.

REINHARDT: It's daily users that get the most attention. And one out of every nine high school seniors falls into that group.

MERROW: Of course, those are the researchers' categories. Kids have their own classifications.

STUDENT: There's freaks. There's squares. There's jocks. There's the hicks. There's hoods. There's cheerleaders. There's basketball players.

STUDENT: Well, they'd be under "jocks."

MERROW: They'd be jocks. So the squares don't smoke dope. Jocks don't smoke dope. It's....

STUDENT: Some do. Some do. Some of them smoke, and they drink and stuff and start getting busted.

MERROW: But squares don't.

STUDENT: No, they don't. They don't do nothin'. They don't touch cigarettes. Nothin'.

MERROW: Okay. Now you mentioned a couple of other categories. You said hoods and hicks.

STUDENT: Yeah. Hoods are all into dope, or primarily into hard drugs. And hicks or cowboys -- you know, romper-stompers, or whatever.

MERROW: And they're not into drugs?

STUDENT: I don't know. I don't associate with the hicks. I couldn't tell you.

MERROW: And so you all are freaks.

STUDENT: Yes. Some of us: well, we're half hoods and half freaks. But me personally, I'm a freak. I will not be a hick. Him, I don't know about. He's half and half. No, I guess he's a freak.

MERROW: There are kids who simply don't try it.

STUDENT: True. That's what you call -- that's in the category of jocks, of jocks and squares. Yeah.

MERROW: Well, that's how you get to be one.

STUDENT: Yeah. How you get to be a square or a straightie, or whatever you want to call him, is somebody not willing to try dope or try cigarettes or alcohol or cuss or nothin', strictly by the Bible, as you'd call it.

REINHARDT: Adults who work with kids also have their own classifications and their own explanations as to why kids use marijuana. First, a school principal.

PRINCIPAL: I suppose I'd say, for the most part, they're kids who have poor attendance problems, or kids who don't particularly care for school; they're here because society says they have to be here. They're kids who are disenchanting, frustrated; kids trying to find themselves, trying to find a group to identify with; kids who've maybe not had a whole lot of success.

MERROW: So you're saying, in effect, that those are life's losers in some way, to begin with. And then they are also potheads. It's not the other way around.

PRINCIPAL: I think that's right. And there again, there're exceptions to everything. I wouldn't say that totally. But I think generally, maybe that's true that these are people who had a lot of problems prior to getting involved in drugs, and that's just one more event in a long chain of things that has not gone right for them.

REINHARDT: Next, a police chief.

OFFICER: In the good old days, whatever that means, the people who were involved in narcotics and marijuana were the ones who were trying to forget the fact that they were being forced to live in pigsties and weren't being given the proper education and weren't being given the job opportunities. What's happened in all of the country -- Montgomery County is no different than any place else, particularly in the suburbs -- and that is that youngsters are bored. I think a lot of that is because their parents just don't pay enough attention to them. It's easier for parents to give them material things, such as a ten dollar bill -- that's probably small compared to what they usually give them now -- instead of worrying about them or talking to them, or discussing things with them and rationalizing things. And so the kids are so bored that they feel that they've got to do something to alleviate that boredom.

REINHARDT: They're life's losers, any way, says the principal.

MERROW: No, says the police chief: they're rich and bored.

NIDA ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR COMMENTS ON THE DRUG PHENOMENON

REINHARDT: Who's right? Well, maybe neither; maybe both. The Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse takes a tolerant view of occasional marijuana use. Dr. Robert Peterson is concerned about the regular heavy users.

PETERSON: Most youngsters are reasonably, to use the current term, together. That is, the reasonably functioning youngster who has other areas of interest is not likely to be heavily into drug use, and, in fact, among high school students, for example, the attitudes do not usually support

heavy use. In fact, about two-thirds of high school seniors, for example, to take a group we studied with some care, don't approve of daily use of marijuana, any more than they approve of smoking a pack of cigarettes or more a day. So there is an awareness. In some sense, most, as in the use of almost anything, tend to be reasonably sensible or cautious about it.

REINHARDT: So are there health hazards for them?

PETERSON: Well, this is a harder question to answer. When you think about it, trying to tease out the role of marijuana from many other aspects of life style is a very difficult one, particularly in that age group, a point of rapid development, where drug use changes from period to period. Probably for most of these youngsters, it isn't; the occasional use is not a serious problem. But the problem, as always, is that some of those who are most attracted to drug use are among the most troubled youngsters on whom the effect may be a good deal more dramatic. The youngster who cannot get along with others and who retreats into a kind of chemical nirvana is not developing the social, the emotional, the intellectual skills to cope with the real world. It's a cop-out.

REINHARDT: Well, was he before he -- would he have been twenty years ago?

PETERSON: Well, let me make an analogy. There're lots of people, we all agree, who had problems before they started to use alcohol excessively. But there's little question I think in any of our minds that the use of alcohol excessively can pose problems beyond the original problem that the individual had. The drug itself can cause problems. And I think in an analogous way, there is good evidence, clinically, that there are some people -- and we don't know the exact percentage -- who do get into trouble. I think we're coming to realize that like any other drug, there are some people who will certainly abuse it. There are certainly some people who will develop difficulties around it. There is evidence, for example, that individuals who are less psychologically stable are more likely, not too surprisingly, to experience adverse effects.

If you're talking about the kinds of biological effects, again most American youth patterns have been very light, for a very short period of time. The average American user is more an experimenter than a regular user. We do know, however, that under conditions of ready availability, use does increase. In some of our experiments in a hostile setting with volunteers where they could smoke as much as they liked, they did escalate to ten, twenty joints a day. So it's certainly possible to smoke appreciable quantities. And when you start dealing at those higher levels, we simply do not have enough accumulated experience to know what are the health hazards.

MERROW: Dr. Robert Peterson, Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse.

THE READY AVAILABILITY OF MARIJUANA

REINHARDT: A lot of young people say we use it because it's there.

MERROW: Where's there? School, that's where.

REINHARDT: Most of the marijuana smoking students we've talked to lately tell us they buy pot in school from friends who are dealers.

MERROW: Those dealers are the bottom link in the drug dealing chain. At the other end, quite a few links away, people are making millions of dollars.

REINHARDT: But these small-time dealers, sometimes called mules, earn no

more than they might in a good parttime job.

MERROW: Not long ago, I talked to two teenage boys who say they're one step above the school level dealers. They say they make \$250.00 a week.

YOUTH: It's the mules that are doing the actual dealing to the people. The main dealer, you know the top guy, he's just dealing to all the small dealers.

MERROW: How many people in this community know that you're a dealer?

YOUTH: Not very many. Right now everybody thinks I'm one of the biggest rednecks you ever seen. If anybody hears that I'm dealing, they'll freak out on me, because they don't believe it at all.

MERROW: Do you ever stop to think that what you're doing is illegal and maybe wrong and bad, a bad thing to do? Do you ever feel guilty?

YOUTH: No, not really, because I think that it's going to be legalized in the next twenty years. It's got to be. I mean there're more -- they took a survey, and, like, one out of -- one out of every six people took to smoking around here. It was that bad.

MERROW: So you say to yourself, well, it ought to be legal, so, therefore, it's okay for you to do it.

YOUTH: Ah, I mean it's no worse than alcohol.

MERROW: Let me put you in that same position. How much of your time do you spend, do you ever think to yourself that what you're doing is illegal, wrong, bad?

YOUTH: That's why I quit. That's why I quit dealing. At first, I didn't think there was nothing wrong with it. But after a while I felt a little guilty, so I quit.

MERROW: Let me be blunt with you. I know you're suspicious of me. I don't believe you. I mean I think you're, to establish some kind of special credibility, you're just saying, well, this is the way it used to be; I quit. I mean I suspect that you still are very active.

YOUTH: I know what it's like. You know, I know what it's still like. Myself, I'm not dealing no more. Honestly, no, I'm not dealing now. I did feel a little guilty. That's how come I quit. You see people take bad trips; you kind of wonder, you know, if it was your fault or not. So it isn't worth it.

MERROW: What kind of future do you imagine? Do you imagine you'll get back into it?

YOUTH: I really don't know. I couldn't tell you. It's hard telling.

MERROW: How about yourself? How do you imagine your own future? Do you think you'll keep on, you know, dealing?

YOUTH: I really doubt it. I don't know. Just right now, it's about half my income. And I need the money pretty bad for my car and stuff. I'm just now getting it set up, another car. So I suppose by the time I get out of high school, I won't deal no more.

REINHARDT: Two teenage drug dealers in Colorado.

MERROW: One dealer we talked to says he's reformed. He says he quit the business because it got to be too grubby, too profit oriented.

YOUTH: See, the thing is like now, I disagree with it. My own personal philosophy is I don't like it. You know, I'd rather that -- I just -- you know, every business has its money to be made, but I just don't like to see it, because the way I look at it is people want these products, you know, to have a good time, and I really hate seeing people rip off people, you know, because people that want to have a good time are just looking for something to get them in a good mood or to, you know, have that good time, and going through a friend for it, because basically that's all there is. And you know, they know they're being ripped off, but there's nothing you can do, see. And that's another advantage to being higher up on this totem pole of, you know, the dealer situation, because the higher up you are, the cheaper you get it for, the less people that are ripping you off; you're higher up on the ladder. So I'd rather just, you know, get things for friends so that everyone can just have a good time.

MERROW: Well, now, when you sell to your friends, do you jack up the price?

YOUTH: No, I don't.

MERROW: Well, you know, from a business point of view, that's bad business.

YOUTH: True. But from my point of view, I don't want to make money off my friends.

MERROW: Think of it in another way. You're taking a risk. You could end up in jail.

YOUTH: No. If you're careful, you don't end up in jail.

MERROW: Tell me about your own personal history, back when you were in high school, involved with drugs.

YOUTH: Tell you about what? What I did, or what I....

MERROW: Yeah. Yeah. What kind of drugs you used as a junior high school and high school kid?

YOUTH: Basically I think about the only thing I haven't done is heroin. And I'm talking in terms of putting it in my arm.

MERROW: Do you have some scruple against doing that?

YOUTH: Yeah. I don't want to put anything into my blood system. You know, I'm not shooting any needles in my arm. That's the way I look at it, you know. And, you know, it's just -- I guess, you know, it's just a matter of personal choice, because, you know, I have a lot of friends that have done it and do it. And you know, most people think "Oh, my God," you know, like immediately, there's a person putting a needle in their arm, and, you know, it's totally just the image it has. It's not that way. It's just another high. But it's the person who does it too often that gets in trouble. But you know, it's like I said, you know; it's just discretion. I don't want to do it.

MERROW: What drugs do you use now?

YOUTH: I smoke a lot of dope. But you know, I just like to smoke dope. But that's about it, really, right now; that's about all I do. I

guess I could even say, you know, to coin a common phrase, right now I'm kind of burned up. You know, I just don't wait. I'm tired, you know. I don't want to do any more of that shit.

REINHARDT: Buy from your friends. That's what all the marijuana smokers say. After all, what are friends for? They won't sell you bad stuff, at least not knowingly.

OTHER FORMS OF INITIATION INTO MARIJUANA

MERROW: Not everyone gets marijuana from friends, however.

REINHARDT: Who turned you on first time?

STUDENT: My father. And my mother, and all their friends. It was a big party in the house, and we all just sat down, smoked a couple of bolts.

REINHARDT: How old were you?

STUDENT: Ten.

REINHARDT: How old are you now?

STUDENT: Fifteen.

REINHARDT: Next on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, some medical and legal reactions to marijuana use by kids.

MERROW: Then later in this six-part series, the real drug of choice among teenagers, alcohol.

REINHARDT: Did you drink as early?

STUDENT: Yeah. I mean mom wants me to cater pina colodas in the bathtub.

MERROW: If you'd like the transcript of the entire series on "Kids and Drugs," send three dollars. If you'd like the cassette recording, send fifteen dollars.

REINHARDT: Our address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

MERROW: Ask for our schedule while you're at it. That's free, and it has the list of past and future OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs.

REINHARDT: The address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

MERROW: And please tell us the call letters of your own NPR station.

STUDENT: I love it. Definitely.

REINHARDT: Are you saying you really don't advocate it for other people?

STUDENT: That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying it's each person's own prerogative whether or not they want to do it. I wasn't pushed into smoking it. I took the bolt from him and took a hit. It wasn't like they handed it to me -- "Here, smoke it." I took it from them and took a hit.

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REINHARDT: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. Natalie Iglitz is our Associate Producer. The Assistant Producer is Charles White. Technical assistance for this program by Flawn Williams and Greg Hedgepeth.

I'm Barbare Reinhardt;

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

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Program No. 153:

"KIDS AND DRUGS, TWO"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
THE EXTENT OF THE DRUG PROBLEM AMONG STUDENTS	
HOW SHOULD SCHOOL AUTHORITIES HANDLE STUDENT DRUG USE? Bob Mullis, principal of Northwood High School in Montgomery County, Maryland and Leland Johnson, a school administrator in Racine, Wisconsin	2-3
STUDENT SKEPTICISM OVER HARMFUL EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA Students in Maryland and Colorado	4
A LESS STERN APPROACH TO THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE SCHOOLS Jerry Marco, principal of Whitman High School in Montgomery County, Maryland	4-5
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MARIJUANA AND MORE SERIOUS DRUGS	5-6
MARIJUANA USE: A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT HEADACHE A Wisconsin Detective	6-7
WOULD STRICT LAW ENFORCEMENT CURB MARIJUANA USE? John Keating, teacher and counselor, from a Montgomery County, Maryland high school	7
NORML FOUNDER COMMENTS ON STUDENT ATTITUDES ON MARIJUANA Keith Stroup, founder of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, (NORML)	7-8
A MORE TOLERANT VIEW BY POLICE Paul Price, policeman of Racine, Wisconsin	8
STUDENTS COMPLAIN OF A DOUBLE STANDARD Colorado students	8-11

KIDS AND DRUGS, TWO"

MULLIS: Students must be in a sober state of mind in order to get the most out of education that they can get. So I've seen too many kids fried on marijuana alone over the years not to be concerned about them. I've seen marijuana take the place of their girlfriends, and I've seen kids become psychologically addicted to it to the point they had to do it every day. And I think it's incumbent upon all educators, indeed all adults, to do something about it.

REINHARDT: A high school principal....

MERROW: Who's determined to keep marijuana out of his school.

REINHARDT: But a hardline position may be part of the reason students smoke pot.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. And on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're continuing our series on drugs and kids.

STUDENT: I don't know. You know, people, you know, just say drugs. You know, they just think, you know, "Oh, wow." You know, a person just gets himself and he takes something, so he is incoherent and is unable to speak. But it's not like that. Well, I guess it is natural towards me. You know, I don't think of it that way. I look at it as fun.

THE EXTENT OF THE DRUG PROBLEM AMONG STUDENTS

REINHARDT: Throughout the six-part series, we'll report on alcohol, PCP and other drugs. But now our special interest is marijuana.

MERROW: It's illegal, but 37% of the high school seniors have used it in the last month.

REINHARDT: Another drug, alcohol, is more popular. In that same senior class, one out of four kids is a problem drinker.

MERROW: One out of nine high school seniors smokes pot every day.

REINHARDT: Marijuana is not hard to find on high school campuses. We've talked to students at fifteen schools in seven states, and they told us what they've already told researchers. Some kids smoke a lot of pot, and most kids have at least tried it.

STUDENT: Oh, I did it all the time during the school year. But you know, now, like, you can see that nobody's smoking pot on the hill now. Usually people will be smoking pot. But after the busts now people have stopped smoking pot.

REINHARDT: This is the place that they would usually go?

STUDENT: Yeah, right here. I mean right along the edge and right all over the place.

REINHARDT: This is the campus, isn't it?

STUDENT: Yeah, it is. With you here, it doesn't help us smoke pot.

you know, because people are paranoid. For all we know, you could be a pig.

STUDENT: Is this going to be live on the radio, or something?

REINHARDT: Yeah. Do you smoke pot?

STUDENT: Yeah, I do.

REINHARDT: Did you this morning?

STUDENT: Not yet. I'm going to.

REINHARDT: Where will you go?

STUDENT: Right here, right where I'm standing.

STUDENT: Right now. It's where we happen to be at the time. No problem.

REINHARDT: How about the police?

STUDENT: What about them?

STUDENT: They won't come up in the snow. They don't -- they're as, you know, fragile. They don't want to come up here.

STUDENT: They'd probably slide and fall on their butts.

STUDENT: If they don't want to come up, maybe they won't. But if you do, maybe they will. Maybe they will. Hey pigs, come up here.

REINHARDT: I talked with those Maryland high school students at a time when police were making marijuana arrests in that county almost every day. In all, 337 kids were arrested.

MERROW: How did it turn out? Well, the police chief was fired, not because of the drug busts, we're told.

REINHARDT: But the drug busts in school stopped after he left.

HOW SHOULD SCHOOL AUTHORITIES HANDLE STUDENT DRUG USE?

MERROW: We're left with an interesting and unanswered question: what should the schools do about drug use? Should the cops be called in?

REINHARDT: Is there some tolerable percentage of marijuana smoking that schools should just ignore? Perhaps trying to stamp it out is like trying to hold back the rising tide.

MERROW: You probably won't be surprised to learn that school administrators disagree among themselves. Let's go back to that hardline principal, Bob Mullis of Northwood High School in Montgomery County, Maryland.

MULLIS: We don't follow kids around in the halls. We don't follow them into the bathrooms. We don't hold their hands while they're at lunch. We don't follow them outside before and after school. What we do is, if they're blatant about it, they're going to get caught. The kids tell me that there are far fewer students abusing drugs on school property, and indeed out in the community, than there were before I got here as principal. They also, however, would not necessarily give me credit for that. Kids are kids. And it's only natural for a teenage person to try to fight authority figures. That's the way it always has been. Perhaps that's the

way it always will be. But I'm not going to throw my hands up and give up. I'm going to persist in trying to do what I feel is best for them. And that's -- their job in life at this particular time is to get the best education possible. And it's a known scientific fact that you learn more when you have a clear mind than you do when you have a drugged mind.

MERROW: Bob Mullin, a high school principal. At his school, kids caught using marijuana are almost certain to be suspended.

REINHARDT: Another administrator we talked to takes a similar hard line, but for a different reason. He likes to make an example of the pot smokers to teach the rest of the kids a lesson.

JOHNSON: I believe that's the way a society functions. That's why we have signs in the street that say don't go over 55 miles an hour. And those who get -- the signs become meaningless to most of us until we see some squad car at the side of the road arresting someone, and then we stop and scratch our head and say "Well, I guess I better slow down a little bit."

MERROW: What about the argument that that's really just a comment on the schools? That is, the kids wouldn't smoke marijuana if the schools were stimulating, and so on.

JOHNSON: I think that that's off. I think it is a misrepresentation of the role of the schools, and I think it's a disaster that people even infer that the schools are the ones where the problem exists. I can tell you again, relating to these discussions that I've had, that parent upon parent talk about repeated occurrences of their kids smoking marijuana around the community at nighttime or in their home. In no way does that come back as a reflection on the schools. The fact is that we open school every day. We try to teach classes. We try to reach kids. And once in a while we'll have some of these kids who are into this particular practice. But the use or possession or involvement in drugs is not, in fact, reflective of the school, any more than a kid who's smoking pot down by the beach on a warm summer evening is somehow or another a student in school. He happens to be a kid that is away from school sitting by the beach.

MERROW: Do you think marijuana use and alcohol use by young people in some way constitutes a threat to our society?

JOHNSON: Well, I believe that anyone is a threat to society if he involves himself in practices that either alter his judgment or his behavior. I think that there is all kinds of evidence even in the use of alcohol that secondary problems occur when people no longer have control of themselves.

MERROW: Let me interrupt, because you could then ban football coaches giving the pre-game pep talk and ministers exhorting from the pulpit. They're altering your mind.

JOHNSON: No, I don't think they are altering their minds. They're influencing you, possibly; influencing you to come about to their way of thinking. But I'm talking about chemicals which, in fact, cause you to lose control, in some way, of your faculties or your faculties. I do believe, though, that among other things, as educators, we must be conscious of the moral implications of anything that we teach. And morality does, I think, affect the quality of our lives. And I strongly believe that we must make major efforts as educators to try to make distinctions that relate to the quality of life, and even as it relates to the moral issues that we teach kids.

REINHARDT: Leland Johnson, a school administrator in Racine, Wisconsin.

STUDENT SKEPTICISM OVER HARMFUL EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA

MERROW: For most of the kids who use marijuana, it's not a moral issue at all. Many students doubt that pot affects their studying or their grades.

REINHARDT: And if they decide it doesn't hurt, they keep smoking.

STUDENT: I really don't like school at all, but I know I have to go. So I go.

REINHARDT: Do you feel as if smoking pot helps you get through?

STUDENT: Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't. It's like I said: It's hard to say. It just adds a little more excitement to the day.

STUDENT: You can learn. It's just that you're just slightly slower when you're thinking, and stuff like that, you know.

REINHARDT: Well, you can learn when you're in class, maybe. But if you're not even in class, then how can you?

STUDENT: I'm doing well. I got about -- I got about a 2.5 average right now.

REINHARDT: That'd be a B+?

STUDENT: Yeah. It's not bad. I'm going to raise it next time.

STUDENT: My grade point average is 1.250, which is a D.

STUDENT: When I'm stoned and go to class, I sit there, and you just -- you know, to keep your head together, you kind of concentrate on one theme. And I just concentrate like on the teacher and what she's saying, or he, whichever. And I feel I get more out of it. I mean I don't go stoned to class all the time.

STUDENT: I sit there spaced out all the time. I don't really pay any attention to what they're saying.

MERROW: Kids in Maryland and Colorado.

What about studying and getting high? The research indicates that getting high can make it hard to focus one's attention, does lead to short-term memory loss and can affect physical coordination and eye sight.

REINHARDT: But that does not mean you can't be a good student most of the time, but smoke marijuana at other times.

A LESS STERN APPROACH TO THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE SCHOOLS

MERROW: Not all school principals are vigilantes about marijuana, of course. Some we've talked to worry only about the daily users, the one in nine.

REINHARDT: Some think the news media have blown the issue way out of proportion.

MARCO: You talked to six students this morning. Six out of 2000 does not mean an army of young people with a problem, that we should close down the rest of the school and deal with those six.

REINHARDT: Jerry Marco is principal of the Maryland high school where 22 of the 337 arrests were made last fall. His school also produced 31 National Merit Scholars last year.

MERROW: Marco says kicking the kids out of school doesn't solve the problem; it may make it worse.

MARCO: We certainly, as a school, could say "We're going to suspend you, exclude you from the school; that's it." And in some cases, that is done, where young people are asked to leave the school. Now that may be a cop-out. I don't know. That's a very difficult one to really deal with. Certainly the kids who are going to deal are going to be excluded. Certainly the young people who are users and we're aware of that and we're working with the kid and the family, when they use it and are observed in doing that, then they are suspended and arrested again.

I think the interesting part to come from all of the arrests is what's going to be the follow-up on the county level. Many of the young people that have been arrested this year at Whitman have been arrested in past years, not only at Whitman; at their junior highs and even, in some cases, they've been involved in it as early as elementary school. But if those young people have the attitude that all this is revolving door justice where nothing really happens to you for using it, then they don't see the significance in changing their way of life.

I think if any school is dealing directly with the problem and having good results with it, then they're doing something right. I think if the school is simply doing things which move the problem from the school site to some other site, then I think that we're not really addressing the problem. We're certainly pushing the drug scene off of the school grounds, and I think that's commendable. I don't think there's a place for drugs in the schools. I think also that in some circumstances where young people have been either drop-outs from the school system, who have elected not to go to school any more after graduating, but continue to come back and hang around schools: that poses a whole new kind of a problem. And I think that when reporting young people are arrested and simply stating that John Jones has been arrested at Montgomery Mall; he's a Wait Whitman student: I just think that that kind of reporting in order to identify a person with a school -- I have some problems with that.

REINHARDT: It sounds to me, though, as if you're really copping out a little bit; that you're saying, well, the reporters aren't doing a good job and there are drop-outs who keep coming back, and it's not our fault; it's just not our fault.

MARCO: I'm not saying that it's my fault or not my fault. I think that when you get into the situation of the young people who seem to have to be involved in drugs in a consistent kind of a manner, that the problem that you observe in people using drugs is only the surface. Generally there's a lot of problems in the inner dynamics of families. There's just a lot of other kinds of problems that roll up into that. And we're trying to deal with those problems, to deal educationally and behaviorally wherever we can.

MERROW: Jerry Marco, principal of Whitman High School in Montgomery County, Maryland.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MARIJUANA AND MORE SERIOUS DRUGS

REINHARDT: Whether or not pot smoking leads to arrest, school people usually associate marijuana with problem students, kids from broken homes, kids with adjustment problems, psychological difficulties, and so forth.

MERROW: But that picture doesn't fit with the statistics. If it did, we'd have an awful lot of troubled children.

REINHARDT: Thirty-seven percent of high school seniors smoke marijuana at least once a month.

MERROW: It may be that school administrators lump all drug users together, regardless of the amount used, regardless of the drug.

REINHARDT: Even the law in eleven states distinguishes between marijuana and other drugs.

MERROW: In those eleven states, possession of a small amount of marijuana is basically a mini-crime, punishable, normally, by a fine. It's like a traffic violation.

REINHARDT: The eleven states: Oregon, Alaska, Maine, Colorado, California, New York, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio and Nebraska.

MERROW: Those states have decriminalized marijuana. Thirty-nine states have not. And in three states -- Nevada, Arizona and Florida -- possession of marijuana is still a felony, a major crime.

MARIJUANA USE: A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT HEADACHE

REINHARDT: With so much variation in the laws, it's not surprising to find disagreement among the police who enforce those laws.

MERROW: A detective in the Midwest told us it would make his job easier if pot were legal.

DETECTIVE: There are more drugs on the street today than there were ten years ago. I would say there's ten-fold more drugs. So all the work we've done through the years making arrests seems to have been done in vain really as far as schools go.

MERROW: Why is this happening?

DETECTIVE: Well, I guess you're just in a drug culture, and kids don't seem to think there's anything wrong with using drugs.

MERROW: Is there?

DETECTIVE: I think you're going to have to re-define a few things as far as the law goes. Marijuana, as far as I'm concerned, after being here for ten years, isn't as harmful as I was first led to believe years ago. I think myself if it was sold, taxed, with the provision of a quality control, where, if you bought -- say you buy a glass of beer, you know it's 3 1/2, 4% alcohol. If you could do the same thing with the THC content in tetrahydrocannabinol -- marijuana -- I think you'd be farther ahead. When you take the fun of breaking the law out of something, sometimes the use of that product diminishes.

MERROW: A lot of kids have said the same thing. It's kind of funny, though, to hear a policeman say it.

DETECTIVE: Well, that's true. I talk to kids. I talk to people all the time. And I can't see anything that bad with marijuana myself.

MERROW: Have you ever used it?

DETECTIVE: No.

MERROW: Why not?

DETECTIVE: Never had the urge to. I like a couple of beers once in a while. That's my thing. But I've just never had -- I've smelled it enough. And just from the odor, I'm sure I wouldn't like it.

REINHARDT: Maybe we should call that detective a liberal on marijuana use, or at least a moderate.

MERROW: There are school people in that category who argue that marijuana cannot be driven off the campus.

WOULD STRICT LAW ENFORCEMENT CURB MARIJUANA USE?

REINHARDT: I asked one guidance counselor whether extremely strict letter-of-the-law enforcement of the rules would get rid of marijuana in school.

KEATING: Would that that were possible. You know, a drug can be slipped into a pocket. I think that definitely that should be the aim and the goal: to keep drugs off campus, and that the school cooperate in ways that they can to further this goal. The school cannot, however, institute a Gestapo-like mentality. You know, we can't be going around searching and doing things that students would see as intimidating. What I'm trying to say is there's a fine line to walk between, you know. "Yes, I am concerned; we're not going to tolerate this; it is strictly forbidden; offenders are going to be dealt with strictly"; that on the one side; on the other side, a school, to be effective as a school, has to be a friendly, accepting place where people respect one another, and sort of teachers and students and their administrators walk in a sort of cooperative, even friendship kind of way.

REINHARDT: Now, you could get by with a lot more on discipline, I bet, in an inner city than you could in a suburb, especially one like the one where Walt Whitman is, which is very wealthy, and parents wouldn't stand for their kids to be in a Gestapo-like atmosphere.

KEATING: I think there's a certain amount of truth to that, yes. One can't be too simplistic about that. Some parents would like to see crack-downs even more strict than the school has had or than the police have had up to this point. But many, many, many parents would not, are very, very aware of the rights of their children, are very, very concerned that their children be treated with every respect and consideration that they could be. And as a matter of fact, in reality, about ninety percent of the students here never touch a drug on campus, you know. And so the parents of students, in general, are very concerned that my child not be treated like a "druggie," or that my child not be in an atmosphere where it's going to be sort of presumed that he's a potential offender, or something like that.

MERROW: John Keating, a guidance counselor in a Maryland high school.

NORML FOUNDER COMMENTS ON STUDENT ATTITUDES ON MARIJUANA

REINHARDT: For the strongest pro-marijuana arguments, go to a lobbyist.

MERROW: NORML is the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. Its founder, Keith Stroup.

REINHARDT: We asked Stroup what he makes of the research that shows 2/3rds of high school seniors disapprove of regular marijuana use.

STROUP: That, I think, is kind of promising. In a sense, the only.

kind of control you're ever going to have, I think, over recreational drug use is going to be peer group control. It's not going to be because some law is passed, and it's certainly not going to be because our school system or our legal system hands down a mandate that it's wrong for kids to smoke. Kids are going to smoke if their own peers seem to encourage it and look up to it, and they're going to discourage it -- or they're not going to smoke as much if their peers discourage it.

It seems to me that that moderation is one we should encourage. We should generally encourage responsible drug use and not try to set a goal of total non-use, which is simply not reachable. Responsible drug use among adolescents may be a concept that's hard for people to swallow. But in fact, whether we like it or not, adolescents are experimenting with drugs out there. So for us to stand by and say you shouldn't use them at all: that's really not having much impact. I think it's better for us to say "if you're going to use them, use them with some moderation."

A MORE TOLERANT VIEW BY POLICE

PRICE: It's only a guess. I think, you know, it's almost like chewing bubble gum. I think it's there, and I think it's widely used.

REINHARDT: Another policeman, Paul Price of Racine, Wisconsin.

MERROW: Have you, the police generally, kind of washed their hands of being able to cope with it in the schools?

PRICE: No, I think when we receive a complaint, we handle it as a complaint. We investigate it, and we try to do what we can with it. And as far as schools go, we try to give it as much extra attention as we can. And by this, I mean we try to get uniformed squads in there where people can readily see that the patrol is out there. And we try to make ourselves as visible as possible when we go out there and hope that this will be a deterrent.

MERROW: Do you think it works? It doesn't obviously work if marijuana is as common as bubble gum.

PRICE: Obviously it doesn't work. But hopefully, by being seen, it might change some person's -- well, you know, if somebody wanted to sell them, obviously if he sees a squad car, he might go away. That's just like saying we put a fire truck out on the street and it's going to stop fires. Obviously it doesn't, you know. But we're hoping that, you know, we can deter it a little bit by being seen and out in the open.

MERROW: Question for you: do you drink?

PRICE: Yes, I do.

MERROW: Now, aren't you doing what you think kids should not be doing?

PRICE: Well, first of all, I'm not a kid; I'm an adult. I'm 43 years old. And if you want to compare alcohol to drugs, for sake of argument I admit that booze is no good. But I smoke one good joint of marijuana, you know, I can't control it, my body can't control it, whereas I can control maybe the booze a little better. And I really don't have an answer for these kids. All I can say is two wrongs don't make a right.

STUDENTS COMPLAIN OF A DOUBLE STANDARD

REINHARDT: For a lot of marijuana users, that policeman is living by

a double standard, drinking alcohol while condemning marijuana users as drug addicts.

MERROW: Naturally there are marijuana users who see things exactly the other way around.

STUDENT: You know, people just look at me and they'll say, you know, that person I bet uses those drugs, you know. And I don't like that at all, you know, because I could look at them and say, "Wow, I bet that person drinks three six packs of beer, you know, and I think that's just as disgusting as they think it's disgusting what I do." And you know, I don't even think of what I do as bad. I don't even -- you see, that's the whole thing that's, you know, kind of funny. I don't even think of what I do. I don't even think of it in terms of thinking of it. Like, it's just part of life, you know. It's like, you know, say, you know, you come home from the office and, you know, you sit down and have a martini. Well, you know, I come home from school and I have a joint, you know. It's just the way it is, you know. It mellowes you out. It makes me comfortable.

MERROW: Well, it makes you comfortable. But how is it -- you know, explain to me how you can be a student, how you can expect to take in what's there offered for you if you're smoking five or six joints a day.

STUDENT: Yeah. But see, the thing is, like, I don't smoke six joints before I go to school. If I'd say, I even just smoke a joint on my way to school, the effects of it have worn off an hour later, an hour and a half later. And for the rest of the day it's fine. You know, I don't smoke joints while I'm going.

MERROW: Could you not smoke?

STUDENT: Yeah. Yeah. Sure. Sure. I'm not, you know, addicted. You can't be addicted. I guess you can be addicted.

MERROW: But you can have a pretty good habit, whether your body needs it or not.

STUDENT: Yeah. You know, it's like you either smoke cigarettes or you don't; you smoke dope or you don't. You know, there're different levels of smoking, you know. There're days I won't even touch it. There're weeks I won't touch it. And then there're times, you know, if you just want to sit and get stoned, you just want to sit and get stoned.

MERROW: Tell me about yourself and what picture you have of yourself, you know, five years from now, or ten years from now.

STUDENT: How do you mean? You mean, what am I going to be doing? I don't know.

MERROW: And what are you going to be like?

STUDENT: I don't know. How do I know? I don't know what I'm going to be like five years from now. I don't know. I guess I'd just like to be photographer. I don't know how; I don't know why. In what terms, I don't know. I'd just like to be, you know -- I don't know what I'll be doing in five years. I don't even want to think about it, because why? It's in the future. You can't control it really. I guess I could. But like I said, I just, you know, live for the present, you know. I mean if I'm going to constantly be worrying, everything I do and everything I say, then, you know, I'll be constantly living in anticipation. And you know, what the hell good is that? I just want to live so that I can say that everything I'm doing at the present is making me happy; I feel good. And

if, you know, the time comes when I decide that I want to do some mind altering drugs, you know, as they want to call it, I will, whenever the time is right, you know. I'm not going to say, "Wow, if I do this, you know, it might hurt my chances of becoming, you know, a business executive, I better not do it; you know, it's pretty stupid."

MERROW: Do you think that you are self-centered, self-absorbed? Do you spend a lot of time thinking about your own self?

STUDENT: No, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about myself. You know, I just don't. You know, I don't let my mind just dwell on me, you know. I don't know. Then again, now that you've asked me, I suppose I do, you know, because I just never think about it, I guess, you know. Well, everybody does, you know. I mean everybody thinks about what they're doing. You know, what am I doing in the eyes of this person? What am I doing in the eyes of society? What am I doing in the eyes of my peers? What am I doing, you know, I guess, if you want to look at it that way. I don't just sit and think about, you know, "Am I doing the correct thing?" you know. I just do what I want; you know, be happy. You know, strive for happiness, you know. As long as you're doing whatever you're doing and as long as you can say "I'm doing what I want." And I'm doing what, you know, I want. I'm happy. I'm doing what I want. Then, you know, what the hell's the difference?

MERROW: In the next edition of OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, alcohol and kids.

REINHARDT: If you've missed part of this series, you might want the complete transcript of the six programs. That's available for three dollars.

MERROW: The set of cassette recordings cost fifteen dollars.

REINHARDT: Write to us at National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036. And ask for "Kids and Drugs."

MERROW: Here's that information again. The transcript of all six programs, \$3.00. The cassette recordings, \$15.00. Please be patient. We can't mail you anything until the series is over.

REINHARDT: Our address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

MERROW: While you're at it, ask for our free schedule with a list of past and future OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs. And tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station.

STUDENT: I don't really smoke in school. In my opinion, I do worse when I, you know, smoke in school. I don't do as much work. You know, I just sort of lie around, fall asleep, you know. The weekends, it's okay, you know. I do plenty of it on the weekends. But I don't do it during school.

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REINHARDT: Options in Education is written and produced by John Merrow. Our Associate Producer is Natalie Iglitz. Charles White is our Assistant

Producer. Technical assistance this week by Flawn Williams and Greg Hedgepath.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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Program No. 154:

"KIDS AND DRUGS, THREE"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF ALCOHOL ABUSE BY STUDENTS	
AN UNDERLYING IGNORANCE ABOUT ALCOHOL Jule Coleman, director of a drug education program in Chicago	1-2
PRIMARY INFLUENCES OF TEENAGE DRINKING Howard Blane, professor of the University of Chicago	2
PARENTAL AND PEER ACCEPTANCE OF DRINKING Judy Katz-Levy of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism	2-3
THE TYPICAL TEENAGE PROGRAM DRINKER Howard Blane, professor of the University of Chicago	3-7
TEENAGE DRINKING AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT PROBLEM	7
STUDENTS COMMENTS ON THEIR DRINKING HABITS	7-8
"POT" DECRIMINALIZATION ADVOCATE CRITICIZES ALCOHOL ABUSE Keith Stroup, founder of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws	8-9
HOW STUDENTS OBTAIN ALCOHOL ILLICITLY	9-10

KIDS AND DRUGS, THREE"

STUDENT: I used to play on the varsity football team last year, and almost everybody on the football team, other than the real serious guys -- and there were only a few of those -- they went out and they'd get a case of beer, a couple of them; you know, they'd get a case of beer and get bombed out of their gourds and come to practice next day drunk, or they'd go to practice drunk or high. That's all they did. There was one kid in school; he had a liquor cabinet, practically, in his locker. He had everything just about. He had his top shelf and his bottom shelf just full with booze.

REINHARDT: Sound like a younger version of "Animal House?"

MERROW: Sodom and Gomorrah High School, maybe?

REINHARDT: That student could be describing almost any American high school today, because booze is back. It's king of the drugs.

MERROW: The drug of choice among teenagers.

I'm John Merrow.

A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF ALCOHOL ABUSE BY STUDENTS

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. We're continuing our series on drugs and kids, with a report on teenage drinking.

MERROW: There's a lot of it. It may take us more than thirty minutes just to give you the bad news.

REINHARDT: For openers, one out of every four high school seniors is a problem drinker. A problem drinker? Someone who gets drunk at least six times a year, or gets in trouble with the authorities, family or friends because of drinking. Our information, by the way, comes from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

MERROW: Typically, teenagers have their first drink when they're 13.

REINHARDT: But by 9th grade -- that's age 14 usually -- 75% of the kids drink occasionally.

MERROW: Twelve years ago, ten percent of teenagers said they got drunk at least once a month. By 1975, the last year we have statistics for, that number had risen to 19%. That's one out of five drunk at least once a month.

REINHARDT: Alcohol ranks first among the drugs used by kids, beating out other drugs like marijuana and PCP.

MERROW: Beer is the drink of choice, by far followed by wine, then hard liquor.

REINHARDT: When researchers ask kids what they're drinking, they sometimes find some startling explanations.

AN UNDERLYING IGNORANCE ABOUT ALCOHOL

COLEMAN: We would say, "Well now, how many, you know, have had a drink?" And you'd see hands go up. And they'd say, "Well, yeah, you know, on weekends, I mean you know, we drink a six pack. But you know, beer? That's not alcohol." Or "Yeah, we're into the pop wines and the regular wines, and we do, you know, drink a lot of that. But that's not alcohol." Beer and wine are

not considered alcoholic beverages.

MERROW: Julie Coleman who ran a drug education program in Chicago.

PRIMARY INFLUENCES ON TEENAGE DRINKING

REINHARDT: Kids may not know what they're doing. Nevertheless, they're likely to keep on doing it. Early drinking behavior is the best predictor of drinking habits in later life.

BLANE: Generally speaking, what determines whether a youngster's going to drink or not is whether his parents drink or not. Where the peer influence comes in is that's the immediate shaper of how a youngster's going to -- when he's going to start, the particular occasion that he starts, occasions that he drinks after that, the amount that he drinks, and so on. It's very much shaped by peer influences. But the fact of drinking, the mere fact of drinking is a historical kind of thing that's determined by many, many influences. The primary one seems to be the parental drinking pattern, the parental influences.

REINHARDT: Howard Blane of the University of Chicago.

MERROW: A lot of kids can't wait to grow up. They imitate their elders.

REINHARDT: And what do their elders do? They drink, that's what. Two-thirds of adults are drinkers. It's socially acceptable to drink, sometimes even to get drunk.

MERROW: But the consequences for kids and adults are horrifying. Half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related.

REINHARDT: In 1975, as many as 10,000 suicides were related to alcohol use.

MERROW: And the costs to all of us are phenomenal: lost production, medical costs, violent crime, fire losses. Alcohol cost us \$43 billion in one year alone 1975.

STUDENT: Sometimes my father lets my brother take a puff or a drink of beer. And I hate beer. I took a sip and spit it out and got sick.

STUDENT: It isn't that bad for you unless you drink a real lot of it. So if you only drink a little bit of beer, I don't think that you should say "Well you're not supposed to drink beer, if they only drink a little bit."

PARENTAL AND PEER ACCEPTANCE OF DRINKING

REINHARDT: Drinking by young people was more socially acceptable today than it was even ten years ago.

MERROW: One way to explain it: adults got so scared about marijuana and other drugs that when they found out that their kids were drinking, they'd say "Thank heavens it's only booze."

KATZ-LEVY: In the early '70s, many parents who found that their kids were abusing alcohol were really relieved to find that it wasn't marijuana.

REINHARDT: Judy Katz-Levy of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

KATZ-LEVY: They don't view alcohol as a drug. In fact, you know, many parents, many adults just view it as a beverage. They don't recognize and also teach their children that it is a drug and that any drug has to be used

carefully and under the right circumstances.

REINHARDT: Isn't it quite possible that kids drink and get in situations where they can drink with each other to be away from their parents, to show -- to rebel to a certain extent?

KATZ-LEVY: Yeah, I think so. I think that's -- well, I certainly that's a factor in the situations where kids are engaged in heavy drinking or problem-matic drinking.

REINHARDT: And how can you ever get -- I guess I'm saying, how can you ever get rid of that need? Kids simply do need to rebel.

KATZ-LEVY: Yeah. I'm not sure that we ever will get rid of the whole rebellion stage that kids need to go through and that alcohol may be a part of, or one component of. And in fact, if we can make that -- if they can do that in a safe way so that they don't kill themselves or others, there may be nothing wrong with it, because those kids are not necessarily going to become alcoholic, and probably won't if it's only a stage in this rebellion, or in, you know, identifying themselves as an adult, as goes on when kids go off to college and join fraternities and alcohol is part of the fraternity scene. That doesn't mean that they're going to be heavy drinkers for the rest of their lives. And I think we have to, you know, think of prevention in a broader light and think of, you know, allowing young people to grow up, but in a way that isn't going to, you know, end their life.

MERROW: Judy Katz-Levy of the NIAAA.

REINHARDT: Maybe some drinking is a normal and necessary part of growing up for a lot of kids. And most kids won't become problem drinkers.

THE TYPICAL TEENAGE PROBLEM DRINKER

MERROW: But one in four high school seniors is a so-called problem drinker. We asked Howard Blane what young problem drinkers are like.

BLANE: You're apt to be a fairly independent kind of person. You're apt to be a little intolerant of authority. You also may have some problems at home with your parents, and you drink to help you with those problems a little bit. I think those are some of the typical kinds. I think you're apt to do a lot of things, too that adults generally don't approve of in teenagers. You may be a bit sexually precocious. You may not do quite as well in school as your friends. You may get into trouble with the school authorities a little bit more. You may drive a car a little bit faster and a little bit more recklessly, and so on.

MERROW: Want to meet a problem drinker? He's 17, and he's been getting drunk every weekend since he was 14.

YOUTH: The first time I really got drunk I was about eight years old. I really got really drunk at a party that my brother was having. And I had, like, whiskey and....

MERROW: How old were you?

YOUTH: I was about eight or nine.

MERROW: That was -- that was just an accident.

YOUTH: No, no. I was down there, and everybody else was drinking. And like before on New Year's, my parents would let us have these little beers. They were like seven ounces or something, not very much. And I liked the effects of them. And everybody else at my brother's party at this time -- everybody else was drinking. And I wanted to try. So I asked them for some

whiskey. And they had some Old Granddad and some Southern Comfort, plus I had beer and whiskey sours.

MERROW: Do you drink regularly now?

YOUTH: Now, yeah. I drink like every -- at least once every week, at least; you know, go out and have a good time, get drunk.

MERROW: Get drunk?

YOUTH: Yeah.

MERROW: Do you think you have a drinking problem?

YOUTH: Well, in a way, yeah; but in a way, no. It's not physical, and it's not as much mental as it is with some people. It's just -- I don't know. I just have more fun if I'm drunk doing things.

MERROW: It sounds to me as if you do have a drinking problem if you get drunk once a week.

YOUTH: Yeah, I guess so. But you know, I could -- I've gone before without getting drunk and, you know, still have good times before. It just seems to make things better. The way I feel there's drug abuse and drug use. And the way I figure there're two different ways than the way like the Surgeon General thinks of it. My idea of drug abuse is somebody that goes home, turns on the TV and there's nobody else around, and they're bored or something, and they'll call up their friend and say "Hey, let's go get high," because they're bored, there's nothing else to do; you know, it's something to do -- go get high. And drug use is like a weekend or something wanting to go out and have a good time.

MERROW: So you put yourself in the category of a user not an abuser.

YOUTH: Yeah. More or less, yeah.

MERROW: Even though you get drunk once a week?

YOUTH: Yeah.

MERROW: And use other drugs?

YOUTH: Well, I don't get into other drugs as much as I used to. But, yeah.

MERROW: Do you know you look as if you drink?

YOUTH: No.

MERROW: You do. You're seventeen years old and your skin is blotchy. Did you know that?

YOUTH: No, I never knew that. I've never really noticed that.

MERROW: Now maybe it's because I know it that I see it. But I think that's not true. I saw that in you before I even talked to you.

YOUTH: Well, you know, I guess you'd know. I don't know too much about the physical effects or anything like that.

MERROW: You know it does have a deleterious physical effect, a harmful physical effect that's cumulative; it adds up.

YOUTH: Yeah. Yeah, I know it causes cirrhosis of the liver and it can

turn your brain into jelly like my father is slowly doing. But I never knew it had any actual appearance effects or anything like that.

MERROW: You mention your father. He drinks?

YOUTH: Yeah. And he's like a chronic alcoholic. He goes through about half a case -- he used to go through about a case of beer a day. And then since he got remarried, he went down to about two to three six packs a day. And now he's trying to -- he's trying to cut down even more, but I don't think he'll be able to do it.

MERROW: Maybe that helps to explain your own pattern.

YOUTH: I guess. I don't know.

MERROW: You say you get drunk because it helps you get through times when you're depressed.

YOUTH: Yeah, I've done that -- I've done that before. Alcohol's supposed to be a depressant, but I don't know. If I keep it at a certain limit, it'll actually lift my spirits. But then if I -- like, if I over-drink and, you know, get really ripped, then it depresses me. And then thinking about being depressed starts making me sick, and then I do get sick.

MERROW: What are you depressed about, to begin with?

YOUTH: School and home problems and problems about not being able to get a job.

MERROW: That just about covers the waterfront.

YOUTH: Yeah, but just all problems. I mean I can handle them at times. But I like to get away from them all every once in a while. Some drugs help me do it at times. Other times it backfires and increases pressures.

MERROW: What else helps you get away from those problems? I mean, what other ways are there to escape, you know, like sky diving or playing the harmonica or running, or whatever? Have you found anything else?

YOUTH: Yeah, watching girls. There're a lot of things I'm interested in, too, but I can't get into them because I can't afford it; can't quite afford it. Like, I like to go see a couple of drag races during the summer and all, but it costs, like, five dollars to get in, and I can't always afford that.

MERROW: Now I'm twenty years older than you are. You're 17; I'm 37. Do me a favor and kind of try to imagine yourself when you're 37.

YOUTH: You mean how -- how....

MERROW: What do you think you'll be doing? Where do you think you'll be? What kind of life do you think you'll be leading?

YOUTH: Well, with my luck, I'd probably be in the poorhouse with a bunch of little kids running around that I probably couldn't feed. I don't know. I kind of see myself as settling down as I get older, because I have been settling down. I'm trying to settle myself down and kind of see living, you know, more or less a normal, happy life. Have a couple of kids, and -- I don't know -- raising my kids the way I would have wanted to be raised; allow them a little bit of freedom like drinking in the house, but only in the house after they're, like, 15 or 16 and only when, like, me and, if I'm married, if my wife's still there, me and my wife are at home, and like not getting into any heavy drugs.

MERROW: Do you have an image of yourself in a job somewhere?

YOUTH: It would probably be something in -- I don't know -- construction. I don't know. None of those jobs, like clerical jobs or anything like that seem to interest me. I don't know. Not enough movement; not enough activity.

MERROW: When you're high, when you're drunk or high on some kind of drug, do you foresee yourself differently?

YOUTH: Yeah, sometimes. Sometimes I've seen myself as an old man, like around 70, taking around ten pills a day to stay alive, or ten pills each meal, rather, to stay alive and not being able to do nothin' for myself, having, you know, tubes hanging from me, and all, in a hospital. And it kind of scares me.

MERROW: Have you ever fantasized yourself as, hmmm, an airline pilot or an executive in a sewing machine company, or, you know, some first rate job?

YOUTH: I fantasized myself many times, kind of flipped out, but being an astronaut, travelling in space. In fact, a couple of years ago, a couple of years back, I wanted to try and get into that. I was going to join the Air Force and then work my way up to, like, NASA, or something like that; you know, going on flights. If I would ever do it, I'd probably be going to Mars or something like that. But I don't know.

MERROW: You've given up on that Air Force dream?

YOUTH: More or less, yes. Right now I'm more or less in the process of getting my act together, trying to do good in school and trying to please my parents and trying to see my girlfriend; you know, things like that. And like, one thing -- I can say one thing. I think I know why I like getting drunk. It's because I take a -- you know, I take a lot of stuff from my parents. And if I were to say something back to them, I would be being disrespectful. And then, you know, it'd get my father all riled up and he'd get really mad and start yelling at me more. So I can pent it up and then go out and get drunk and then let it out playing around with my friends. You know, like go out and start fighting around or something, you know. I used to come home and my mother'd give me fifty questions about what have I been smoking, what have I been drinking and what have I been eating. Well, she doesn't say eating; she says what kind of pills have you been taking. Every time I came home. And like there were lots of times I came home perfectly straight; you know, haven't done nothing, just gone out and walked around and talked and just played around with friends.

MERROW: What are you going to do after this conversation? Are you going to go get high or get drunk?

YOUTH: No. I'll go home, turn on the radio, listen to some tunes, try to relax, I guess.

MERROW: No beer, though, till the weekend.

YOUTH: No. See, that's what I mean, like I more or less use; I don't abuse, because I restrict it to weekends where it wouldn't interfere with school or anything like that.

MERROW: I think you've got your own definition of use and abuse there. I mean to me, somebody who gets drunk once a week is an abuser.

YOUTH: Yeah, true. I guess everybody's got their own little definitions. But I'll agree that, you know, I am abusing. But I'm more or less using it more than other people have. Like there're some people I know who come to school stoned off their ass every day. And I think that, in my terms, is abuse, you know. There's no regulation on it. It's just "Let's

go do it," for the hell of doing it, more or less, you know. But it's not like trying to relax or trying to mellow out with your friends, or anything like that. It's just going out to do it. And in school, it's definitely stupid. I tell almost anybody that that gets high in school or gets drunk in school any more, because you need school. I mean there's no way you can get around it. I mean now you've even got to have a high school degree to become a ditch digger, you know, as bad as it is out there. And it's just stupid to go out and get drunk and all.

REINHARDT: That 17 year old high school student doesn't consider himself an alcohol abuser or a problem drinker. He's just a user, he says, because he doesn't drink in school or on week nights.

MERROW: But by any other definition, he has a problem.

* * *

TEENAGE DRINKING AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT PROBLEM

YOUTH: Oh, like I said, it's one of the "ragged" songs. Everybody starts getting into it. It's a lot of fun around here.

REINHARDT: Tales of in-school drinking have become commonplace, vodka in the thermos, and so forth. But most teenage drinking occurs in places where adults aren't.

MERROW: Often in cars, sometimes parked, sometimes moving.

REINHARDT: Maybe in bars. You'll find kids there because they have fake IDs, or because the bartenders don't worry about the age of their clientele, or because the police just give up trying to catch them.

POLICEMAN: It's so easy. I was a kid once myself. And when I was 17, I was going to bars, and you were supposed to be 21. If you want booze bad enough, you're going to find a way to get it. Kids today, if they get turned on, they'll find an older brother or a friend and give 'em a buck or so to go get them a six pack or a bottle of wine. I mean, it's easy to obtain, you know. There's plenty of money today. Kids seem to have a lot of money, and I don't know; I don't know how you'd stop the alcohol problem. I really don't.

MERROW: Well, now, should it be stopped? You just lived your own childhood when you were 17, going to bars when you were supposed to be 21. Should something be done?

POLICEMAN: Well, I would imagine something should be attempted to be done. But probably our biggest problem is when kids first start out to drink. They don't know what their limits are. Maybe they should -- maybe they should be taught how to drink instead of finding out the hard way.

MERROW: We're going to make headlines here: "Policeman favors legalizing marijuana and serving beer in the cafeteria," or whatever.

POLICEMAN: Well, just my own experience. I have a boy now that's 20, and when he was younger, or 17 or 18, he'd have a beer or two at home with me.

MERROW: How about you? What drugs do you use?

POLICEMAN: I don't even take medicine. I have a couple of drinks maybe before dinner or at night, and that's about it.

STUDENT COMMENTS ON THEIR DRINKING HABITS

MERROW: When was the last time you got drunk?

STUDENT: Last weekend. Just about every weekend. My week is hard. That's one of the best ways I find to relax. It's not very good on my system, but I love it.

MERROW: Every weekend, though, you like to get drunk?

STUDENT: Oh, I don't think "Oh, boy, the weekend's coming; I'm going to get drunk and hit on the bottle the minute classes end on Friday." But usually I end up drinking because I go out and do something with other people, and they're drinking. And it's not because of them I drink, but it's just there and I do it. And I find that I really relax and don't worry about too much until Monday morning.

MERROW: Then tell me about the after-effects.

STUDENT: It depends on how much you drink. You could have a terrible hangover, and that's not too good. But I usually don't drink that much. You mean any regrets as far as what you've done? I don't do anything that I wouldn't have done if I wasn't drinking. It just makes it more pleasant all the way around that I'm drinking and I'm doing that, whatever it may be. I could still enjoy whatever it is without, you know. But I wouldn't regret it. I mean alcohol does not give me -- it's not like courage in a bottle, or whatever they say. That's bull. I don't feel that way, because I'm not going to go out and it's not going to change my whole attitude about the way I live my life.

REINHARDT: Alcohol may not be courage in a bottle for that young woman, but that's one of the common criticisms of liquor. It makes drinkers a little more than courageous. They become downright belligerent.

"POT" DECRIMINALIZATION ADVOCATE CRITICIZES ALCOHOL ABUSE

MERROW: Some of the harshest critics of alcohol, perhaps surprisingly, belong to the pot lobby, the marijuana advocates.

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup is the founder of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

STROUP: Well, I don't happen to drink alcohol. I do occasionally drink wine. So I mean I'm not a total teetotaler. But I, on the other hand, do not generally drink alcohol. I don't drink beer; don't drink hard liquor, etcetera. I used to. I did for a number of years when I was in college, etcetera. But I found it to be a very debilitating drug. It was the kind of drug use where, inevitably, you would over-drink and you would get up in the morning with a hangover, and you weren't very productive the next day, if at all. You'd either cut your classes or you'd get into work late, or whatever. So I quit using it just out of those reasons. And I mean I'm an adult. It's legal for me to use it if I want. I don't happen to like it. I think it has a great deal higher potential for harm to the user than, say, marijuana. It's addictive, for example, where marijuana isn't. And it causes direct damage to a number of body organs.

So I don't think there's any question about the research on alcohol. It is a very dangerous, addictive drug. It just happens to be legal. So the fact that it's legal means that it's more available, and it means that a lot of young people do, in fact, end up using alcohol as their primary recreational drug of choice. I'm sorry to see that happen, because I think it's among the more dangerous.

MERROW: It's also easier to get than marijuana.

STROUP: Because of our legal system. That's true. Now, I don't think for kids there's a great deal of difference any more, to tell you the truth. I think most kids can get marijuana on a half-hour's notice, and they can

probably run down to the liquor store in about the same amount of time. But nonetheless, there's a certain implicit encouragement towards alcohol. You get on an airplane, and the kids fly around today too, and they see that. They try to sell you a drink of alcohol before the plane takes off the ground. Well, now, can you imagine if they sold heroin? Well, heroin's another addictive drug that they could just as easily sell as they could alcohol. Or if they sold marijuana, I don't think people would think that was appropriate either. But yet they seem to think it's perfectly all right to sell alcohol on an airplane. Well, I don't think they ought to sell any drug on a common carrier, whether it's a bus or an airplane, or anyplace else. I'm offended by that.

So my general statement on alcohol is don't use it if you don't, because it's just not a habit that's very good to take up, healthwise. If you do use it, use it with a great deal of moderation. It still accounts for over 30,000 deaths a year on the highway, and a lot of those are young people.

MERROW: So your position really is a strong anti-alcohol position.

STROUP: It is, and not out of any sense of morality. I choose drugs based on how they seem to affect my body, not on someone else's sense of morality. I don't like alcohol as a drug. I see people get very aggressive; see a lot of fights in bars, and things like that, that I never see at marijuana parties, because marijuana doesn't cause aggressiveness. If anything, it seems to cause passivity. So if people are going to use drugs at all, let's aim them towards those drugs that have the least potential for harm, not the greatest. And that means towards marijuana and away from alcohol.

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

MERROW: Of course it's not either/or. You can feel free to avoid both marijuana and alcohol.

REINHARDT: But in fact, lots of kids are drinking. And some of them are drinking too much.

HOW STUDENTS OBTAIN ALCOHOL ILLICITLY

MERROW: Where are they getting the alcohol in the first place? Well, one under-aged student taught Barbara a few of the facts of life.

REINHARDT: I'm talking with a 16 year old girl who's about to show me her fake ID.

STUDENT: It looks exactly like me. It looks exactly like me, except where it says I'm 23.

REINHARDT: Is this a picture of you?

STUDENT: No, it's not. It's not even of me.

REINHARDT: Where did you get the picture?

STUDENT: My girlfriend had it. She got it from one of her friends. And she uses it too, and it's fake.

REINHARDT: How is it -- is it a real driver's license?

STUDENT: Yep, it is.

REINHARDT: So it's not one of those you order from a company?

STUDENT: No, it's a real one. It looks just like me.

REINHARDT: Where did you get it?

STUDENT: Well, one night I had to go to this bar with my sister and her girlfriends, I mean, to hear a band. My sister has a boyfriend who's a fiddle player. His name is Frank. And we wanted to go up and see him play. So I had to bring an ID with me. So my girlfriend lent it to me.

REINHARDT: When does it say you were born?

STUDENT: November 15th, 1955.

REINHARDT: Which would make you 23.

STUDENT: Right.

REINHARDT: And you're 16.

STUDENT: Right.

REINHARDT: Have you never had any trouble getting in?

STUDENT: Never.

MERROW: But you don't have to have a fake ID, we've learned. It's easier than that.

REINHARDT: And we'll prove it to you on the next edition of OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

STUDENT: Well, like I said, it's one of the "ragged" songs. Everybody starts getting into it. It's a lot of fun around here.

MERROW: That's Part IV of this special series on kids and drugs. You can get the transcript of the entire series for \$3.00.

REINHARDT: Or the set of cassette recordings for \$15.00.

MERROW: Our address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

REINHARDT: Three dollars for the transcript; \$15.00 for the cassette recordings of the entire six-part series.

MERROW: Write us at National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

REINHARDT: And ask for our free schedule with a list of past OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs, as well as a list of what's ahead.

MERROW: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University.

REINHARDT: Principal support is provided by the National Institute of Education.

MERROW: Other funds come to us from Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

REINHARDT: This series is written and produced by John Merrow. Natalie Iglitz is our Associate Producer. Charles White is our Assistant Producer, with technical assistance from Dennis Herndon. Some of the material for this

program came from Vivian Ducat in Boston and Mark Fromuth in Beaumont, Texas.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: This is NPR, National Public Radio.

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Program No. 155:

"KIDS AND DRUGS, FOUR"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
LIQUOR DEALERS EXPLAIN SALES TO MINORS Liquor dealers in Greenwich and Stamford, Connecticut	
AN INTERVIEW WITH A PACKAGE STORE OWNER	2-3
A PERVASIVE PATTERN OF VIOLATION OF LIQUOR LAWS	3-9
POSTSCRIPT ON ONE INCIDENT	9-11
A SUMMARY OF A DAY'S ILLEGAL ALCOHOL PURCHASES	11-13
LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN WAKE OF NPR PROBE	13
PROPOSALS TO LIMIT AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS	13-14

KIDS AND DRUGS, FOUR"

REINHARDT: Ringing up the sales in a liquor store.

MERROW: The question is, who's buying?

REINHARDT: In this Connecticut town, it's a group of kids, all under age, buying liquor illegally. The minimum age, 18 in Connecticut, doesn't seem to mean very much to the liquor store owners.

MERROW: It's a simple two-step process. Minors try to buy and liquor stores sell.

REINHARDT: By 9th grade, three-quarters of our children are already drinking.

MERROW: And by senior year, one out of every four kids is a problem drinker. That means getting drunk at least six times a year, or getting in trouble with the police, the school authorities, parents or friends because of drinking.

REINHARDT: Those statistics come from a 1978 study done for the Congress by the National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. We're continuing our series on drugs and kids.

MERROW: This time we're focusing on how kids get the booze.

REINHARDT: Over half the states, 28 of them, have set the minimum drinking age at 18. Another nine states put the lower limit at 19.

MERROW: But those statistics about drinking habits weren't for 18 or 19 year olds. The 75% of 9th graders who drink are 14, not 18 or 19.

LIQUOR DEALERS EXPLAIN SALES TO MINORS

REINHARDT: Where do young kids, children under the legal drinking age, get the alcohol? Well, perhaps at home. Perhaps from an older friend.

MERROW: Perhaps they buy it themselves at a local package store.

REINHARDT: If you don't believe package stores sell to minors, stay tuned. They do.

MERROW: And if pressed to explain why they sold to a minor, the dealers have a ready answer.

DEALER: They look like 18.

DEALER: Yes, they were big enough for 18 for me. To me they were 18.

DEALER: They didn't look that young to me.

MERROW: How come you didn't card them?

DEALER: Because they looked to be about 20 years old.

MERROW: They don't look to be 20 years old.

DEALER: To me they do.

DEALER: I didn't ask those three, no, because he looks big enough. They look old enough.

DEALER: It doesn't look that way to me. I mean, he may be 16, or you're right. I mean, look, what you just said is right. If I have any doubts, I make them sign the thing or ask for ID. I didn't have any doubts. I thought they were of age.

DEALER: He looked 18. I have no idea which boy you're talking about, first of all, so I really don't know.

REINHARDT: Those men and women work in or own liquor stores in two cities in Connecticut, Greenwich and Stamford.

MERROW: Connecticut has 1825 package stores, 95 in those two cities alone.

REINHARDT: There're other kinds of liquor licenses, of course, bowling alleys, cafes and so forth. In fact there're over 7000 places in the state to buy alcohol.

MERROW: The State Liquor Control Commission has a grand total of 24 inspectors to cover the entire state. Four are desk-bound. Twenty are on the road most of the time.

REINHARDT: But none of them has the power of arrest.

MERROW: The Liquor Control Commission leaves it to the local police to spot violations of the liquor law. But since the police are usually otherwise occupied, it's really up to the liquor stores themselves to turn away underage customers.

REINHARDT: To be blunt, the decision to obey the law or not is left up to those who make money by breaking it. And their chances of getting caught are just about nil.

MERROW: If they get caught, they could lose their license. They could be forced to close down for a few days.

REINHARDT: But in fact, those things almost never happen. The usual penalty is a fine, around \$250.00.

MERROW: What do liquor stores do when kids try to shop there? Well, you're about to hear the results of our experiment.

AN INTERVIEW WITH A PACKAGE STORE OWNER

MERROW: How has business been for the holiday?

DEALER: I don't talk to tape recorders.

MERROW: How come?

DEALER: I don't know. Where are you from?

MERROW: I'm from National Public Radio in Washington.

DEALER: Good. It's been excellent.

MERROW: Huh?

DEALER: It's been excellent.

MERROW: Has it been excellent? How often do you get minors coming in

here?

DEALER: Not so often.

MERROW: You just had a kid in here, 17 years old.

DEALER: Is that right?

MERROW: You sold him a six pack.

DEALER: I don't think so.

MERROW: I know so. I saw him come in; I saw him come out and know how old he is. How come you didn't ask him for an ID?

DEALER: I don't think I have to talk to you.

MERROW: Well, you don't have to talk to me, but I'd like to know. How come you sell to minors?

DEALER: I think I'm going to have you arrested if you don't get out of the store.

MERROW: Why would you have me arrested?

DEALER: Because you....

MERROW: You're the one who broke the law. The kid who bought that beer is 17. Doesn't the law require you to ask for an ID?

DEALER: Mister, get out of the store right now. Get out of this store right now.

MERROW: You're going to get yourself in trouble with the law.

DEALER: Good.

MERROW: As you can see, I was just thrown out of that store. That, incidentally, was the first place we've gone into. And I've just been forcibly ejected.

A PERVERSIVE PATTERN OF VIOLATION OF LIQUOR LAWS

REINHARDT: That was the beginning of a pattern. One or more of the three minors John hired for the day would enter a package store and ask for beer.

MERROW: The kids, two aged 16 and one 17, were told to reveal their real age, if they were asked, then leave the store. Now, I know there are 16 and 17 year olds who do look 18, but not these kids. They're white, middle class high school students.

REINHARDT: If they weren't asked, they simply paid for the beer and left. Then John went into the store, identified himself and talked to the liquor store clerk, or tried to.

MERROW: He doesn't want to be interviewed?

CLERK: You're disrupting. Well to get an interview with me, make an arrangement and come in; I'll talk to you.

MERROW: Well, I'm coming in mainly because I wonder if you sell beer to minors.

CLERK: We don't sell beer to minors.

MERROW: You just sold beer, two six packs to two different kids, one 16 and one 17.

CLERK: No. Would you get out of my way, please; I'm busy. Okay? If you want an interview, come in; I'll talk to you. But make arrangements. We're busy now. Okay?

MERROW: You're back in the car. What happened?

STUDENT: I picked up a -- I picked the first six pack I saw. And I proceeded to the counter. A man stood up wearing a leather jacket. And they said to me "Would you like a cold one?" I said "No, this would do fine; I'm saving it for tonight." And from there on the transaction went out, and I left the store.

MERROW: How old are you?

STUDENT: I'm 16.

MERROW: Were you asked for an ID?

STUDENT: No, I wasn't.

MERROW: Let's go ask him. This time you go in, and I'll come in right behind you. And let's see if he behaves differently when he sees a tape recorder around. Let's see if you're asked for an ID.

STUDENT: All right.

Do you know what time it is?

CLERK: Yeah, ten after 4:00. What's this, John?

MAN: The big ones.

STUDENT: I don't need a bag. I really don't.

CLERK: You don't?

STUDENT: No.

CLERK: All right. Okay. Thank you, sir. Have a nice day.

MERROW: Now let me step in after it.

CLERK: He's testing out his equipment over here.

MERROW: No, no, I'm a reporter, as a matter of fact.

CLERK: A reporter.

MERROW: Yeah. And I'm interested in how come you didn't ask that kid for an ID.

CLERK: An ID? Because he looks like he's over 18 years old.

MERROW: He's 17.

CLERK: He is?

MERROW: Yeah.

CLERK: Are you sure?

MERROW: I know it.

CLERK: Well, all right. Let me see your ID.

MERROW: But you were supposed to ask him for an ID....

CLERK: I know. But he doesn't look 17 to me. He looks about 20.

MERROW: And there as a kid in here about three minutes before that, and you sold him a six pack also.

CLERK: Uh-huh.

MERROW: You didn't ask him for an ID either.

CLERK: No, I didn't, because he looked to be 18 or 19 years old.

MERROW: But the law is you're supposed to ask for an ID.

CLERK: I agree with you. I agree with you that's the law.

MERROW: How come you broke the law?

CLERK: Well, I didn't -- I didn't know that I broke it. I would never deliberately break the law if I knew it. I wasn't aware that I broke the law.

MERROW: Twice in five minutes.

CLERK: That's true, I guess. I should have asked him for the ID. But I didn't, because I assumed that they were of age.

MERROW: How often a day do you ask a kid for an ID?

CLERK: Any time we have any doubt. But we don't get many kids in here. The ones that come in that we have doubt, we ask them. They have to show us their driving license. And like I said, if we have any doubt, then they can sign this paper here. That's what it's here for.

MERROW: I just don't believe that you ask people.

CLERK: What?

MERROW: I don't believe that you ask kids when they come in here. These two guys....

CLERK: Because I told you: they didn't look to me to be 16 years old or 17, whatever you say.

MERROW: Do you have kids of your own?

CLERK: Yes, I do.

MERROW: Does it make you comfortable thinking that these kids bought beer as easily as that....?

CLERK: No, under-age, of course not. We're not here to break the law. We don't want to see any kids getting hurt or drinking when they're not supposed to. I mean I don't want to be responsible for it. That's for sure. I wouldn't want anybody to sell it to my kids under age.

MERROW: You just spent eight dollars. On what?

STUDENT: That's right, a case of Budweiser beer.

MERROW: Were you asked?

STUDENT: No, sir.

MERROW: Tell me what happened.

STUDENT: I went in there. I said "I'd like a whole case of Budweiser beer."

MERROW: Now you were together this time, the two of you. Did he look at either of you? Did he....

STUDENT: He didn't ask any questions. He just....

STUDENT: He asked me "Do you want it cold?"

MERROW: What was that?

STUDENT: He asked if we wanted it cold or not. And we said, you know, it didn't matter. No questions at all.

MERROW: How are you doing?

CLERK: Fine.

MERROW: How's business? I'm a reporter for National Public Radio in Washington, working on a story on the availability of alcohol to teenagers who are under age. You just sold a six pack of beer to a 17 year old and a half-pint of vodka to a 16 year old.

CLERK: I don't know what you're talking about.

MERROW: You just sold it to them.

CLERK: Did you send them in here?

MERROW: Yes, I sent them in here.

CLERK: Please, I have a living to make, and I'm trying my best.

MERROW: You're throwing me out?

CLERK: No, we're not throwing you out. I'm asking you to please step outside while I get in touch with somebody. Please, I'm trying to make a living. I don't want no problems.

MERROW: Just for the record, we've done something a little bit different this time. First, the 17 year old went in, bought a six pack of beer. Then the 16 year old boy went in, bought a six pack of beer. And then we sent in another person, a 16 year old girl; just turned 16 and doesn't look 18, certainly. And what happened with you?

STUDENT: Well, I went in and asked the lady for a six of Schaefer. And she didn't have it in cans, so she gave it to me in bottles. And that was it.

MERROW: Did she ask you for an ID?

STUDENT: No, she didn't even question me at all.

MERROW: Did she look at you?

STUDENT: No, we talked about the weather.

MERROW: Merry Christmas. How's business?

CLERK: All right.

MERROW: I'm from National Public Radio. And I wonder whether you sell beer to minors.

CLERK: No, we don't.

MERROW: You just did.

CLERK: No, I didn't.

MERROW: Yes, you did.

CLERK: I did not.

MERROW: I watched you.

CLERK: You're wrong.

MERROW: You sold a six pack of lite beer to a 17 year old boy.

CLERK: You're wrong.

MERROW: No, no, no, don't touch the machine.

CLERK: Let me say something.

MERROW: Okay.

CLERK: I got ID on every kid that comes in this store.

MERROW: You're going to tell me that that young boy who walked in in the sweater of several different colors, that you asked him for an ID?

CLERK: Yes. All right? Why don't we have a little talk?

MERROW: Go ahead.

CLERK: Shut this off.

MERROW: No, I won't shut the machine off. I'd like to know why, when the law requires you to ask for an ID, you did not do that.

CLERK: That kid is 18. Why don't you go ask him? Let's go ask him?

MERROW: Let's go ask him. Do you want me to bring him back?

CLERK: Yes, please.

MERROW: I'll bring him back.

Here's the boy. Did you ask him for an ID? And you told me you asked him for an ID, right? Did he ask you for an ID?

STUDENT: No, sir.

MERROW: Well, tell me what happened?

STUDENT: I just asked for a cold six pack of lite beer. And he got it for me. He told me the price, and we made the exchange.

MERROW: He did not ask you for an ID?

STUDENT: By no means.

MERROW: Is this the boy who bought the beer? You're on the telephone.

Are you calling your boss? You are. You nod your head. Why are you calling him? Tell me if this is the young man you sold the beer to.

CLERK: ...Boss is up here, 1051 East Main Street in Stamford. The liquor store. I have a gentlemen here with a tape recorder harassing me. Yes, he is.

MERROW: Tell the police that you sold beer illegally too.

CLERK: Uh-huh. Last name is....

MERROW: Don't cover the microphone. Don't cover my microphone.

CLERK: ...Or I'm going to take his tape recorder and cram it down his throat in about two seconds. Get him up here. And I want a court order to seize his tapes. Okay. Hurry up.

MERROW: Did you call the police?

CLERK: Why don't you shut that off for a minute and we'll have a little talk.

MERROW: No, I don't want to shut it off.

CLERK: You won't shut it off.

MERROW: Are you locking me in? Okay. What's the point of locking me in here?

CLERK: For harassment.

MERROW: Harassment?

CLERK: Yeah. You want a lawsuit on you.

MERROW: Okay. You....

CLERK: You know, I'm in the middle of doing my paperwork, my book work, and you're going to come in here and bother me? If you don't shut that thing off, pal, I'm going to sue you personally.

MERROW: Okay. What are we going about the fact that you broke the law?

CLERK: I didn't break the law. I want to see some ID out of you. Right now.

MERROW: There you go.

CLERK: Do you mind if I take a look at that?

MERROW: Yeah, I do mind if you take it.

CLERK: Oh, you do? Oh, now the shoe's on the other foot, and I can't look at your ID card.

MERROW: You've already locked me in.

CLERK: Could I see your name?

MERROW: Sure. Look like me?

CLERK: National Public Radio.

MERROW: Uh-huh.

CLERK: What are you shaking for?
MERROW: My name is Merrow, M-E-R-R-O-W. Got it?
STUDENT: I got it.
MERROW: Okay. Now do you want to open that door?
CLERK: No. We'll just wait for the cops to come up here.
MERROW: What do you expect the cops to do?
CLERK: Throw you out and seize that tape. And I want to know why you're doing this?
STUDENT: You can't throw us out with the door locked.

POSTSCRIPT ON ONE INCIDENT

MERROW: I've just spent about ten minutes answering questions, and so has the boy who's with me. Naturally, we've answered all questions, and now Officer Fitzpatrick is questioning the liquor store employee and the lawyer who's arrived and who tried to take pictures of us. The policemen told him if he took pictures of us, he would be arrested for interfering with an investigation. About ten minutes has gone by. Business is continuing. There's a man in here now trying to buy our bottle of vodka. Not the best climate for business, however, with -- there were six policemen, and now there are -- well, there're three squad cars here, two policemen in the store and several policemen outside.

I wasn't allowed to put any of that on tape with the policeman. I asked and was told I had to turn the machine off, that I could not record any of the questioning.

This is just a final report on that particular incident. We're leaving that particular liquor store now. A summons was issued to the employee, Robert C. Palter. He has to appear in court in about a week on a charge of selling alcohol to a minor. The two officers in charge of the investigation -- they have indicated that we may be subpoenaed to testify, although they predict that he will simply plead guilty and pay the fine. We're on our way.

Okay now, You just came from this liquor store, and you bought a six pack. Were you asked any questions?

STUDENT: No, I wasn't whatsoever.
MERROW: Now you just came out of the store two minutes later, and you got a bottle. What's in that? That's a pint of Southern Comfort.
STUDENT: Half-pint.
MERROW: A half-pint of Southern Comfort. How much did it cost?
STUDENT: Two dollars and eighty cents.
MERROW: Any questions asked?
STUDENT: No, sir, none at all.
MERROW: Just "What do you want?"
STUDENT: She asked me if I wanted a half-pint because it was cheaper than the pint.

MERROW: I think I'll go ask her.

Smells nice in here. How are you doing? I'm a reporter. And I'm curious. You just had two kids. I'm from National Public Radio in Washington. You just had two kids in here, two kids. One bought a six pack and one bought a half-pint of Southern Comfort.

CLERK: Right.

MERROW: You didn't ask them for IDs. How come?

CLERK: Because they've been in here before and I've asked them before.

MERROW: You think those two kids have been here before?

CLERK: I know they have. I know my customers.

MERROW: You know both those kids?

CLERK: They've been in here before. Yes.

MERROW: One of those kids lives in a town thirty miles from here. He's never been here before in his life.

CLERK: You're kidding. Well, he looks like someone else that comes in here.

MERROW: He's 16 years old.

CLERK: Really? Well, he looks like another fellow that comes in here. And I, you know, thought it was him.

MERROW: What about the other guy? Now he's 17. He's never been here either.

CLERK: Really? Well, he looked like 18 to me.

MERROW: You just broke the law twice.

CLERK: Is this some kind of joke?

MERROW: No, it's not a joke at all. I'm interested in how easy....

CLERK: Did you send those boys in here?

MERROW: I sent those boys in here.

CLERK: Well, you could have fooled me. The tall one looked like 18, and they looked familiar to me.

MERROW: How often do young people come in here?

CLERK: I don't know. I'm not always in here.

MERROW: This store is known as one of the easiest places around here to get illegal booze.

CLERK: You're kidding. Really? I'm not aware of that.

MERROW: Well, we're not picking on this store. We happen to have been to seven or eight, and no one has asked these kids yet. But in fact, this store, around this town of Greenwich, is known as one of the easiest places to get booze illegally.

CLERK: I don't know. I'll just have to be more careful from now on.

A SUMMARY OF A DAY'S ILLEGAL ALCOHOL PURCHASES

MERROW: Okay, let's have a score card here. How are we doing? What do we have so far?

STUDENT: We have eleven purchases. We have twelve six packs of beer, one half-pint of Southern Comfort, one half-pint of vodka.

MERROW: Again, for the record, this time we are trying to get asked. We've just gone to a liquor store; we're in Greenwich. First, I sent in the 17 year old. Did he ask you for an ID?

STUDENT: No, sir, not at all.

MERROW: Then I sent in the 16 year old boy. What happened?

STUDENT: Well, I went in and bought a six -- a case, a case of Michelob. And the man said to me "Do you want it in bottles or cans?" And I said "I'll take it in cans."

MERROW: The first guy -- he took in a five dollar bill. You took in a ten dollar bill. And now with the 16 year old girl, we gave her change. We gave her a whole pile of quarters, and we said, you know, fumble around; look young. And what happened?

STUDENT: All he did was ask me whether I broke open my piggy bank.
[Laughter.]

MERROW: Say that again.

STUDENT: He asked me whether I had broken open my piggy bank.

MERROW: And gave you the beer?

STUDENT: Yep.

MERROW: What did you buy?

STUDENT: Tuborg Gold, a six of beer.

MERROW: You sound so sophisticated. Have you ever bought beer illegally before?

STUDENT: Yes, once.

MERROW: Earlier today?

STUDENT: Yes.

DEALER: I know. I know. Don't talk to the guy.

MERROW: Why don't you want your people to talk to me?

DEALER: Because I don't know who you are.

MERROW: My name's John Merrow. I'm from National Public Radio in Washington. I'd be glad to show you identification.

DEALER: Well, you've come at the wrong time. Why don't you come when we're not busy?

MERROW: How about those kids who were just in here?

CLERK: Which kids were just in here?

MERROW: They came in separately within the last eight minutes. The first one bought a six pack of Budweiser. The second bought a six pack of Black Label. And the third, the girl, bought a six pack of Schaefer bottles.

CLERK: Oh, yes. But she's over 18. I didn't ask her, no. She looks it.

MERROW: You didn't ask any of those kids.

CLERK: No, because they look older.

MERROW: Let me tell you how old they are. The first one's 17; the second one is 16; and the third one's 16.

CLERK: But to me they look, you know -- I mean, I didn't know I'm supposed to ask everybody, everybody. I mean they tell me not to sell under 18, which I don't. But I don't ask everyone who walks in. No. But there is some I do. One even went to A&P. And he says "Keep your liquor." He says "I go down over there. I go down there." And one time -- he was on a bicycle one time. Those look like kids.

MERROW: You mean you didn't sell it to a kid until he said "Ah, forget it; I'll go buy it somewhere else?"

CLERK: Yeah. I'm going down -- yeah, I'm going down there.

MERROW: You might as well sell it to him, then. If you don't, somebody else will, huh?

CLERK: Well, I don't care what he says. But I mean he didn't get it here. So? What else can I do? So what do you want me to do?

MERROW: It's nearly five hours later, five hours since we started this little adventure. We have 150 cans of beer in the back of this car and two bottles of vodka and some kind of whiskey. We just went back to the first place where we bought our first six pack. I went in afterward. In fact, I was forcibly ejected. The guy laid his hands on me, as they say. So now we went back and I sent the other boy in, asked him to buy me a six pack. He's back, dejected; couldn't get any beer. What happened?

STUDENT: Well, I walked into the store and the man was on the phone. And I turned around and got a six pack of Schaefer. I put it down on the counter. And he was on the phone, and he started laughing; said "Ha, ha, ha, a guy locked him in the store." And I believe that has reference to the one, the other liquor store where the police showed up. Well, any way, he took the beer and he was about to put it in the bag, and he said "Do you have any ID?" And I said "No, I don't." He said "No, I'm not selling today without ID."

MERROW: Today?

STUDENT: Today. Yes, that's what he said. He said it directly. His words were "I'm not selling any beer today without ID." So I suppose if one goes back there tomorrow, you might be able to get beer.

REINHARDT: After 18 different purchases of over 150 cans of beer and two bottles of liquor, the minors were finally asked for proof of age. The two 16 year olds, boy and girl, went into a package store giggling, and she asked for a case of beer for her boyfriend's birthday present. The clerk said "Are you 18?" And they said "No." That ended the streak.

CLERK: They look too young to me.

MERROW: Well, congratulations.

CLERK: Well, I'm sorry I sold to the first boy, because he looked old to me, because I judge kids by their age, their looks. If they come in with braces on their teeth, I know they're not 18. And I say if they're -- they had young faces. Huh-huh. They were too young-looking.

MERROW: We stopped the experiment then, because one of the kids had to get back for her driver's education class. She'd turned 16 a few days earlier.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN WAKE OF NPR PROBE

REINHARDT: The story doesn't end there, however. The state is prosecuting two liquor dealers on charges of selling to a minor.

MERROW: The three minors and I were also issued summons; mine for inducing minors to purchase alcohol; theirs for attempting to purchase alcohol. A few weeks later we appeared in court and the charges against us were dropped.

REINHARDT: They were dropped because we had been misinformed by the Liquor Control Commission about the law itself.

MERROW: Which is to say we don't advise that you try to recreate our experiment.

PROPOSALS TO LIMIT AVAILABILITY OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS

REINHARDT: Actually you're probably more interested in what can be done about the easy availability of alcohol to our kids.

MERROW: There are a number of options: raise the drinking age; let the state run the package store; hire more police; strengthen the State Liquor Commission; give kids more constructive things to do so they won't drink; or impose stiffer penalties on stores that break the law.

REINHARDT: You can find flaws in every one of those probably. There's no simple answer.

MERROW: Maybe stiffer penalties would be a beginning. In all of 1978, only 86 Connecticut package stores were caught selling to minors. Seventy-five of them simply mailed in the standard fine, \$250.00. Only eleven of the cases led to hearings and then to fines, either \$250.00 or \$500.00.

REINHARDT: Not one of the violators was shut down for even one day, even though the Liquor Control Commission has the power to do that.

MERROW: You may be wondering whether these two cities, or the state, are typical.

REINHARDT: You're probably hoping they're not. In just the last few weeks we've talked with young people in seven states. Every kid, without exception, has said the same thing.

MERROW: Alcohol is about as easy to get as soda pop.

REINHARDT: Just about everywhere.

STUDENT: He asked me whether I had broken open my piggy bank.

MERROW: And gave you the beer?

STUDENT: Yep.

MERROW: What did you buy?

STUDENT: Tuborg Gold.

MERROW: Next on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, the effects of alcohol, marijuana, PCP and other drugs on our kids. That's Part V, and we hope you'll be with us.

REINHARDT: But if you can't make it, or if you want the full transcript of the series for reference or for a friend, that's available for three dollars.

MERROW: The cassette recording is available, too, for fifteen dollars.

REINHARDT: Our address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

MERROW: The transcript, three dollars; the cassette recording, fifteen dollars. And our address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D. C., 20036.

REINHARDT: We also have a schedule of upcoming programs and a list of past programs available in transcript or on cassette. That's free for the asking.

MERROW: And please tell us the call letters of your own NPR station.

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REINHARDT: This series is written and produced by John Merrow. Natalie Iglitz is our Associate Producer, and Charles White is Assistant Producer. We had technical assistance for this program from Flawn Williams, Greg Hedgepath and Robert Nock. And we were helped immeasurably by the three minors. Special thanks to them.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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Program No. 156:

"KIDS AND DRUGS, FIVE"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
PCP AND ITS HEALTH HAZARDS Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard	
STUDENT RECALLS BAD PCP "TRIP"	2
MARIJUANA DEFENDER CAUTIONS AGAINST PCP USE Keith Stroup of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws	2-3
THE CONTINUING CONTROVERSY OVER MARIJUANA Robert Peterson, Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse; Keith Stroup of NORML; and Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard	3-5
THE PARAQUAT SCARE	5-6
STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH LSD	6-7
THE USE OF HALLUCINOGENICS: A MIXED PICTURE	7-8
ALCOHOL USE AND POSSIBLE LONG-TERM ILL-EFFECTS Howard Blane of the University of Pittsburgh	8-10

KIDS AND DRUGS, FIVE"

MERROW: Describe the worst high you ever had?

STUDENT: The worst high I ever had was -- it was when I lived up north, and we had just smoked some flakes. And I was with a bunch of friends of mine.

MERROW: PCP?

STUDENT: PCP, yeah. And I was with a bunch of friends of mine in the car, and we were coming back from school, because it was right after school. And I thought I lost my head. I thought I left my head back at school. And it was really a trip. And they were telling me that I hadn't, but I just wasn't listening. And I was screaming and everything, and I couldn't find -- when I put my hands to my head, I couldn't find my head. It was just -- I don't know. It was really terrifying to me.

REINHARDT: A high school student in Maryland.

MERROW: On OPTIONS IN EDUCATION this week, we continue our series on kids and drugs.

I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt. And this time a look at what happens when kids take drugs -- alcohol, marijuana, speed, LSD and the popular drug that high school student referred to, PCP.

PCP AND ITS HEALTH HAZARDS

GRINSPOON: PCP is a drug that is quite directly -- can be quite directly life-threatening. These kids have no idea what dose they're taking. They don't know anything about it. They even think they're taking a different drug. And it can be a very direct, immediate threat.

REINHARDT: PCP, angel dust, angel flakes. Its chemical name is phen-cyclidine.

MERROW: It's easy to make. Users often mix it with another substance, like oregano, then smoke it.

REINHARDT: Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard told Vivian Ducat that the effects of PCP are unpredictable, and worse.

GRINSPOON: First of all, many of the kids who take PCP don't know it's PCP. They often think that they're taking THC, which is tetrahydrocannabinol, which simply doesn't exist on the streets. THC can be synthesized, but it's not available on the streets at all.

DUCAT: What does it mean "they think they're taking THC?" Is that a non-harmful drug?

GRINSPOON: Well, THC is the active ingredient of marijuana. So they think they're taking something like marijuana. But also it's often peddled as mescaline or LSD. In perhaps only about 25% or 30% of cases do people who take PCP actually know that it's PCP. So that's one problem. And they are completely unprepared very often for the effects of this drug once they become psychotic. And it's a very, very wild and dangerous psychosis. For one thing, people become, may become quite unpredictably assaultive, and

people have even been homicidal on this drug. People become suicidal, or even, without being suicidal, they do things which threaten their lives. For example, there've been a number of cases of drownings of people high on PCP. Now these are people who aren't even psychotic. They're just high on PCP. But because they believe that they can do extraordinary things and they really lose their sense of orientation, there have been a number of drownings. People just go swimming, and they drown.

The psychosis itself may last for a few days, or even up to a couple of weeks. And unfortunately, a part of that psychosis is that people have an amnesia from it; they can't remember the psychosis. It seems to me that that's part of the reason why many of these young people continue to take PCP even after they've had the horrendous experience of this psychosis, because, in fact, they don't remember it. They don't remember the bad, the really bad trips, so to speak. And then beyond that, [as] one gets into a higher dose level, one can become comatose, have a significant elevation of blood pressure, which may be life-threatening, finally convulse. And there have been, unfortunately, a number of deaths.

REINHARDT: Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard.

When he says that kids who have a bad PCP trip may not remember it, he's not kidding.

STUDENT RECALLS BAD PCP "TRIP"

STUDENT: I saw this one guy. We were at this party once, and he was smoking flakes. All right, he's sitting there; he's looking at this picture. And I really don't understand why, how the picture could react the way it did. It was like a real mellow scene; it was like mountains, and it had snow on the top, and, you know, it was a real pretty scene. And he was staring at it for, I like, a half an hour. And then he stood up real slow and looked around at everybody else in the room. And he just started screaming and jumping around. And he started throwing furniture. And he started just running around the house. And then he ran out the door. And it took like -- I think it was about even people to hold him down. And we held him down, brought him back into the house before anybody saw that he was "spacing" out.

MERROW: That was PCP?

STUDENT: Yeah, that was PCP. And we brought him back into the house and tried to calm him down. And he wouldn't calm down. So this one guy -- his name's Peanut -- hit him in the nose a couple of times, knocked him out for a while. And then he woke up and we told him about it. And he said he didn't even know; he didn't realize he was doing it.

REINHARDT: PCP is not as widely used by kids as marijuana. And that's a good thing. It's a lot more dangerous.

MARIJUANA DEFENDERS CAUTIONS AGAINST PCP USE

MERROW: The most vocal defenders of marijuana wouldn't touch PCP.

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

STROUP: I have smoked PCP only once or twice by accident, where people passed joints around at parties. And before you realize it, you notice a very strange taste. For those people who do smoke marijuana fairly regularly, I think they will notice a difference. But for the average marijuana smoker, I'm not sure they would. They very likely might smoke a joint of

oregano that's been treated with PCP and the person may call it marijuana. That's always been one of the problems. PCP is an animal tranquilizer. It undoubtedly is a dangerous drug. It has very bad side-effects for the users. I don't think the answer is to try to frighten every PCP user to death, but we certainly want to get the information out to potential users that don't use PCP because it's dangerous; not because it's illegal. It is also illegal, by the way, and you have to be careful. But it's dangerous. That's why you don't want to use it, because it will hurt you, whereas with marijuana, don't use it because it's illegal. That's a little less convincing.

MERROW: Well, to follow that logic, then you should never use marijuana that you do not know the source of, because it might be treated with PCP.

STROUP: Well, if you took it to the ultimate logical extension, that's true. But marijuana is not generally adulterated. That has been found to be a very small percentage of marijuana. Like in the labs in Los Angeles, etcetera, less than one percent of the samples they get in have anything to do with marijuana. So I don't think that the major problem with drugs is marijuana polluted with adulterants. But I would say to anybody that is out there and thinks that PCP is just like marijuana, it isn't. It's a dangerous drug. And any time somebody tries to sell you a white powder that they call THC, for example: THC is not stable. And if you're going to have it out there, you'd have to have it under liquid oxygen, or whatever.

So it clearly, in about ninety-one percent of the cases, is going to turn out to be PCP. And that is, in fact, a dangerous drug. It's an animal tranquilizer. I would never use it myself, and I would tell kids, "Don't."

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup, founder of NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

THE CONTINUING CONTROVERSY OVER MARIJUANA

MERROW: Stroup makes the controversy over marijuana sound like yesterday's news.

REINHARDT: But all the evidence is still not in. What happens to kids when they smoke marijuana? What may happen to them ten years from now?

MERROW: The latest study from the National Institute of Drug Abuse found that one out of nine high school seniors uses marijuana every day.

REINHARDT: How horrified should we be? Well, even the experts don't agree.

MERROW: First, Robert Peterson, Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse.

PETERSON: Marijuana itself is injurious to pulmonary function, and it would be shockingly surprising if it were not. It's, after all, inhaled material, deep inhaled. It's a plant material. It's unfiltered. It contains hydrocarbons that are known to be hazardous. And we know from the work that's been done at a place like the National Cancer Institute that it can produce tumors in animals, at least on skin testing. You would expect that if it were used heavily enough and for long enough, it would produce problems in people as well. And there is some evidence in terms of the work that's been done at UCLA, the University of California at Los Angeles, suggesting that marijuana does, in fact, interfere with lung function.

We are quite certain that marijuana, acute intoxication, being

high, interferes with learning; it interferes with memory; it interferes with recall, all of which means that these youngsters are not learning the kinds of things that they ought to be learning, acquiring the adult skills that are going to be necessary to function in an adult world.

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup, who says that marijuana ought to be legal.

STROUP: Anyone who takes the time to go through the research that's been done I think will come away convinced that marijuana's no doubt not good for you, because it is, after all, a drug and it's an outside agent you're taking into your lungs, etcetera; it's probably not healthy in the long run. But compared to almost every other possible drug available today, they can't really show much wrong with occasional marijuana use. And most people are now willing to concede that occasional users are really not under any great risk of harm. It is the long-term heavy user that they're mostly concerned about.

MERROW: That you're concerned about as well?

STROUP: Well, I think anyone who's concerned about public health problems must focus on concentrated use. That's true with tobacco; that's true with alcohol. And the person who smokes a couple of tobacco cigarettes, for example, a week is not under any increased threat of cancer than I as a non-smoker. Yet someone who smokes two packs a day is certainly under an increased threat of cancer. So I think with marijuana smokers, it's probably going to end up being the same thing; that the heavy, long-term users are going to be the ones who suffer the greatest consequences.

Obviously, in a learning situation, any intoxicating drug simply has no place. It's simply going to make it impossible for you to be effective in a learning situation. So limit your drug use, if you're going to use it at all, to very well-defined recreational periods.

MERROW: A lot of kids tell us they do better in school because they smoke dope. They get high before class, and they're better able to focus, etcetera, etcetera.

STROUP: Well, there're lots of people who would tell you, for example, from the alcohol culture that they can do better work under alcohol or that they can drive better under alcohol. We all know that's wrong. And I think it's equally as wrong with marijuana smokers. All the tests have shown that, obviously, you should not get high before you study for an exam or before you go to class, or anything that requires that kind of delicate attention. There is a problem when you're intoxicated with marijuana of what's called short-term memory loss, for example. So that if, in fact, you study while you're intoxicated with marijuana, you may find that you're not able to remember what you studied when you're not intoxicated and you're taking the exam.

So it's not something that those of us who have read the literature and are sophisticated marijuana smokers would ever do. I mean I'm a lawyer. But I'm a daily marijuana smoker. But I can assure you I wouldn't smoke before I went to court. I limit my smoking to when I'm watching the news in the evening, and I'll smoke a joint.

REINHARDT: Finally, Dr. Lester Grinspoon of Harvard.

GRINSPOON: Well, I think that while I am comfortable in speaking about marijuana for adults, the harmfulness of that drug has been grossly exaggerated, and that while it is certainly not a harmless drug when we talk about adults, it seems to me that the harm, its potential for harm from a strictly psychopharmacological point of view is not as great as the harm

that we as a society impose on people by arresting, for example, last year 457,000 people and all that is involved as a consequence of that act, that experience for a person.

However, I am disturbed by the fact that so many young people are using marijuana as much as they do. Because we don't have data with regard to very young people. Youngsters are different from adults in a number of different ways. I mean even leaving the physiological consequences of that aside, from a psychological point of view it certainly is distressing to think that, let's say, a 12 or 13 or 14 year old kid would be using marijuana every day. One has to wonder whether there isn't some problem which he is attempting to deal with, or not deal with it, as the case may be, or as more accurately put, by, you know, keeping himself stoned so much of the time; perhaps some developmental block or some other kind of problem. And that, I think, is distressing. And of course one wonders, too, what the effect of being stoned every day has -- what is the effect on learning. I mean this is a time when he has to learn a great deal. I don't mean just in the school room, but elsewhere as well. He has to learn to deal with anxiety. He has to learn to deal with problems. He has to learn to cope. He has to do the work of growing up. And whether this is a way of taking a leave of absence from that is certainly open to question. And if it is that kind of thing, then it seems to me it is distressing.

STUDENT: The best [high] I've ever had was off pot. A bunch of friends of mine and I went down to a dam not too far from here, and we smoked a lot of pot. And we just sat around and relaxed, you know, and just really paid a lot of attention to everything around us, you know. And we had a real good time.

REINHARDT: All three experts -- Peterson, Stroup and Grinspoon -- agree that heavy use of marijuana by adolescents cannot be good.

MERROW: Short-term effects often include disorientation, memory loss, temporary loss of physical coordination and an inability to concentrate. Those effects are temporary. They last until the high is over. No one knows the long-term effects.

THE PARAQUAT SCARE

REINHARDT: Some marijuana can do immediate damage. You may pick up a joint that's been sprayed with the chemical paraquat.

STUDENT: Right now in English I'm doing a thing on marijuana alone. And they say, you know, it's helping glaucoma and terminal cancer patients with nausea, and all that. But I've never had any real bad effects, except for last year I had a lung collapse on me because I got hold of some marijuana that had paraquat in it. And I had one of my lungs collapse, and they had to rush me to the hospital, and all that kind of stuff.

MERROW: Other than that nothing bad?

STUDENT: Well, I don't really consider that bad, because it didn't hurt me, you know. It hurt me for the moment, but then the lung, you know, repaired itself, and it should never happen again.

MERROW: No, as a matter of fact, it's now easier for it to happen again.

STUDENT: No, it's -- well, from what my doctor told me, you know, what happened was I blew a hole in the side of my lung. And it repaired itself within a few hours. And the reason that that happened is because of the

chemicals in the paraquat. It, like, ate away part of my lung, or something. And I'm not sure exactly what happened. And so I got a small hole in the side of my lung.

REINHARDT: That high school student got his paraquat sprayed marijuana from friends.

MERROW: It seems buying from friends won't protect you from a bad trip.

STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH LSD

REINHARDT: This girl's 16 year old friends introduced her to LSD.

STUDENT: I was living in Miami at the time, close to an airport. And you hear planes going over quite a bit. But I was hearing planes about every second. And I thought it was normal, until I realized that it wasn't. And that's when I started freaking out, because they were very real to me. And then I started freaking out about other things and thinking that I was just going to lose it completely and lose touch, and that's when I would just die.

MERROW: That's scary.

STUDENT: Oh, it was extremely scary. And I was living at home. And I thought about going downstairs and telling my mother I was doing acid and to take me to the hospital. And....

MERROW: That's scary.

STUDENT: That was worse than not doing it, thinking it. And I just immediately started thinking of her facial expression when I told her. And I got as far as the door of my room and turned the knob, and then thought about how she'd look at me and say "Oh, my God." And her saying "Oh, my God" would freak me out worse than how I was freaked out at the time. So I didn't. I just sat down and heard all these planes and broke out in a terrible sweat.

MERROW: And you were by yourself.

STUDENT: Yes, I was by myself. And what preceded the whole incident I think of my having a bad trip is I was at a party and I didn't tell anyone I did a hit of acid; somebody had just given it to me, which was stupid for me to do. But they just gave it to me and I was getting off on it. And I told my brother that I was getting kind of scared because I had done a hit of acid. And he said "Oh, my God, you should see your pupils," you know. And that immediately made me feel like I was obvious to everyone, and no one else was doing it. And he said "I'm not coming in with you when I take you home." He did not live at home. And he said "You're going to go in and face them alone." And that's when I felt like it was so obvious and blatant. And you don't have all your senses when you're on a trip. And I haven't done it since.

But any way, it was pretty bad.

MERROW: LSD is not as popular among kids as it was in the late '60s. Less than 15% of high school seniors have ever tried it. Less than 10% use it as often as once a month.

REINHARDT: Nevertheless, in talking to kids for this series, we ran into several who've tried acid. And most of them had a story to tell.

MERROW: We asked drug users to describe their worst bad trip. Most of them recalled a time when they'd dropped acid.

STUDENT: I was at my sister's house. And I had taken some purple haze.

MERROW: Which is a kind of LSD?

STUDENT: Yes. To some people it's considered the best or the highest, the most potent. And I was just sitting there letting it all happen to me. And then things started spinning around. Like I couldn't handle what was going on. Like, my sister had on some loud music. And it was -- it was like battling in my brain between, you know, the music itself and what it was sounding like to me. Because I knew what was playing, but it didn't sound right. And I started getting really paranoid about, you know, certain noises. And then like about an hour later, my sister said -- and I don't remember after that point. About an hour later my sister said I was crawled up in a corner screaming at the top of my lungs. And their neighbors called the police. And I do remember the police being there. And they asked what was the matter with me. They asked my sister, and my sister said that I had had a bad reaction to a drug, a surgical drug. I don't remember what she said. Because I had been to the hospital about two days before for -- I got stitches in my thumb; I'd cut my thumb.

MERROW: Your sister lied your way out of it.

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: How old were you?

STUDENT: I was about -- I was about 13 or 14.

THE USE OF HALLUCINOGENICS: A MIXED PICTURE

MERROW: Luckily, kids are using fewer hallucinogens like LSD, according to NIDA.

REINHARDT: But one Midwestern policeman sees things differently.

OFFICER: We have a thing called Mr. Natural that's making a comeback. It's like blotter acid. It's a piece of paper with just a little LSD in it. And some of your prescription drugs are abused. One good thing the state of Wisconsin did recently was cut out the dispensing of amphetamines in drug stores. And doctors can only prescribe them in certain cases of narcolepsy or something like that. Our amphetamine problem has really diminished in the city. It's very seldom we get them, and when we do get them, their source is usually Mexico.

Kids today, they'll -- I find kids they'll take anything. You know, they take Vivran. It's a caffeine thing. And they'll take it and they'll actually think they're on a trip, whereas the actual result is they're nowhere, you know. We had a drug -- they call these things "beans." They're aphedrin, you know like a caffeine. Now we don't have controls for aphedrin in this state unless they're in a 25 milligram dose. So what they do [is] they sell them in 10, 11, 12 milligram dose. We arrested a guy with 16,000 of them. And we couldn't get a warrant because of the dosage. They take those. Those are quite popular.

REINHARDT: The stimulants he described are the second most popular of the illegal drugs behind marijuana. They're known as speed or amphetamines. And kids sometimes take one form or another for a boost.

MERROW: They might take speed to get through exam week, for example.

REINHARDT: That's no guarantee of passing the exams, though.

STUDENT: I was working at this warehouse a couple of months ago, and my hours were 9:00 to 12:00. And I wasn't getting home to, like, 1:00. And then I'd get something to eat and wouldn't get to sleep until 2:00. And then I'd come to school and be all ragged and tired. And so I started hitting speed and got some black beauties, bought some black beauties. And one day I took like four of 'em. And I don't know if it's just my body, or whatever, but it reacted differently on me and I got really paranoid. And like, we were in history. And this one girl that's kind of dizzy; she always asks me questions when we have lectures, because she doesn't catch what they're saying. She kept asking me questions, and I couldn't handle it. A couple of times I felt like I was going to, you know, tear her throat out. And I had to get away from her. And I got down to the smoking lounge, and, like, I couldn't handle all the people moving around and crowding around, you know.

But I look at drugs as a good thing and as a bad thing. And as far as my experiences, there have been more good things than bad things.

ALCOHOL USE AND POSSIBLE LONG-TERM ILL-EFFECTS

REINHARDT: Even after bad trips, kids still use drugs. Sometimes they take more than one at a time.

MERROW: Drugs in combination may be the most dangerous of all; speed and alcohol, for example.

REINHARDT: With or without other drugs, getting drunk is the American way for a lot of kids and adults. Maybe it's a rite of passage.

MERROW: We aren't sure of the long-term effects of many other drugs, but alcohol will cause serious long-term damage.

REINHARDT: There's hardly a part of the body not affected by alcohol.

MERROW: The brain and nervous system, heart, muscles, liver.

REINHARDT: And indisputably, alcohol is one cause of cancer.

MERROW: Is alcohol more harmful for kids than for adults? Howard Blane of the University of Pittsburgh says we're not sure.

BLANE: There is a theory that because you are growing and your body is changing that maybe some of the effects of alcohol will be magnified or speeded up.

REINHARDT: This is a theory only?

BLANE: It's a theory. The evidence is not -- there's a little bit of evidence for it, but it's not really all that credible at this point. I think it's more dangerous in another kind of sense, in that we don't approve of drinking in teenagers, and so that the penalties for them are greater for the same kind of drinking behavior that would occur in a 21 or a 22 year old. The penalties are heavy for a 15 or 16 year-old.

REINHARDT: If you could rank the drinks according to frequency of use -- beer, wine, whatever....

BLANE: Oh, oh, oh, yeah. Sure.

REINHARDT: And then also damage to the body. The myth is that it doesn't really matter whether they drink beer, does it?, because that's not really all that bad for you.

BLANE: Well, beer is the beverage of choice for most young people. It is particularly true for boys. And it seems to be coming increasingly so for women, young women as well. Wine is probably the second, but it's way, way down. They don't drink much wine. And hard liquor....

REINHARDT: It doesn't have as much....

BLANE: Yeah. And hard liquor would be the next -- young people don't like the taste of hard liquor, the burning sensation you get when you take it. And beer is much milder in that regard.

In terms of the effect, you get the same effect from any drink. But there are some variations on that theme. Well, a glass of wine, a highball and a bottle of beer have about the same amount of alcohol. But the volume of a glass of wine is a lot less. So if you drink as much wine as in a bottle of beer and at the same time that you drink a bottle of beer, you'll have consumed a hell of a lot more alcohol.

REINHARDT: And the kids tend to do that?

BLANE: Well, they're unpracticed. Yeah. They don't know the effects. And so you give them some -- if you give kids a bottle of hard liquor, they will -- they'll tend to gulp it down. And this can have disastrous effects. Once they get more experienced with it, they don't do that. The effects are very negative for them, very adverse. And so they don't want to get into that again. They really don't like passing out and getting sick and doing things that they don't remember what they did, and so on.

MERROW: Next on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we'll reporting on what schools and other agencies are doing to teach kids about alcohol and other drugs.

REINHARDT: It's a problem. Should you try to ban all drugs, or simply steer kids away from the most dangerous ones?

MERROW: I've been told that kids are more sophisticated today, that, you know, the consumer movement has taught them not to put all kinds of strange things into their system and that, you know, they know more and so on. And you're saying the exact opposite.

OFFICER: No, not that they -- they know more. But kids will take what they can get. If beans are there to take, that's what they'll take. You could almost find that out by checking on your overdoses of the kids that go to the hospital and find out what they take. In most cases they don't know what they took.

* * *

REINHARDT: Drug education: that's next on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

MERROW: If you've missed a program or two in this six-part series and want the complete transcript, it's available for three dollars.

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I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: This is NPR, National Public Radio.

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Program No. 157:

"KIDS AND DRUGS, SIX"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	i
SOME PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS CONCERNING DRUG EDUCATION	
A STUDENT'S ASSESSMENT OF DRUG EDUCATION MATERIAL	1-2
AN EXAMPLE OF A DRUG EDUCATION MOVIE IN THE SCHOOLS	2-3
NIDA OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON DRUG EDUCATION MATERIALS Dr. Robert Peterson, Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse	3
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS: ARE THEY EFFECTIVE? Judy Katz-Levy of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism	3-4
WHEN TO START DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAMS John Keating, a Maryland high school drug education counselor and Fifth graders in a Salem, New Hampshire drug education program	4-7
THE NEED FOR CANDOR IN DRUG EDUCATION Keith Stroup, founder of NORML	7-9
THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY Policeman from Wisconsin	9
DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAMS Dr. Robert Peterson, Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse	9-11

KIDS AND DRUGS, SIX"

REINHARDT: What brought you here tonight?

STUDENT: I wanted some true information on the effects of marijuana to the body. I do not disagree that marijuana does do bad things to the body. But is it any worse, truthfully, than breathing this polluted air that we're breathing now? And I don't know. I just keep getting this feeling that they're not listening to me.

MERROW: Kids came to that PTA meeting in Montgomery County, Maryland looking for truthful answers about drugs.

REINHARDT: Some of them had a tough time. It's hard to get accurate information about drugs -- alcohol, marijuana, PCP.

I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. This is Part VI of our series on "Kids and Drugs."

SOME PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS CONCERNING DRUG EDUCATION

REINHARDT: In this edition, drug education. Or maybe we should say mis-education.

MERROW: Want a tough job? How would you like to be the person in charge of designing a drug education program for kids?

REINHARDT: Now before you start filling out your application, think about the occupational hazards that lie ahead.

MERROW: How will you make sense out of the massive amounts of research about drugs, some of it inconclusive, some of it highly debatable?

REINHARDT: Will you try to ban all drug use, or just try to prevent drug abuse?

MERROW: How will you explain to parents that it may be okay for their kids to experiment with some drugs?

REINHARDT: How will you get kids to trust you?

MERROW: And even if you do, how will you measure your success? You can't follow the kids home.

REINHARDT: You say you've decided to keep the job you've got? We don't blame you.

A STUDENT'S ASSESSMENT OF DRUG EDUCATION MATERIAL

STUDENT: I have doubts because I don't want to -- I don't want to mess up my mind and body permanently. And if they answer my questions like I really want and he says "Yes, it was taken into consideration about the mouse being given two joints per day...."

REINHARDT: Doesn't that mean the equivalent of two joints per day?

STUDENT: As it reads right here -- let's see. "In male mice, normal sperm increased five-fold." I don't know what that means, to tell you the

truth. "In females, two joints per day stopped milk production." It does not say anywhere in there about the equivalent. If they'd give me this information, I would not have to ask these questions.

So I feel there is too much propaganda, more than there is actual information.

REINHARDT: Isn't it really possible that the fellows up there don't know that much about it? They're not scientists. Shouldn't you really try to go to a scientist or to scientific research?

STUDENT: Yes, I agree with that. But why should they fill us full of propaganda then, which I feel they are doing because of the way they have treated me tonight.

REINHARDT: Do you -- will you change your smoking habit because of -- after this program?

STUDENT: As soon as I can find some true information that it does do bad damage to the lungs, etcetera, etcetera, I will definitely quit.

MERROW: He wants proof before he quits. But there isn't any proof that marijuana smoking does long-term damage, because Americans haven't been smoking the stuff long enough for scientists to find out.

REINHARDT: Would he quit if there were proof? Who knows. Lots of people still smoke cigarettes in the face of hard evidence about the damage they do.

AN EXAMPLE OF A DRUG EDUCATION MOVIE IN THE SCHOOLS

MERROW: What kind of drug education do our kids get in school? Well, we're going to show you a movie, or a little bit of one, any way.

REINHARDT: Here, we'll set the scene.

MERROW: Mom and Dad have just discovered their son's marijuana, and the truth is out. The kid smokes pot.

FATHER: Tom, these -- these are yours?

SON: Yeah, they're mine.

MOTHER: Oh, Tom, how could you?

SON: Mother, it's only grass. I'm not a dope fiend./

FATHER: I want to have a talk with you, Tom. Please?

NARRATOR: Like all too many of his contemporaries, Tom is experimenting with something he knows little about, something about which too little is known by anyone: marijuana. It's a scene which must have been played out countless times in countless ways, all equally heartbreaking: the father-son confrontation.

SON: Mom smokes like a chimney. And you have a drink every day and smoke too.

FATHER: It's not the same.

SON: Why not? It's easy for you to stand there with a cigarette in one hand and a drink in another and tell us not to smoke pot.

FATHER: Have you really considered all the consequences?

SON: There's not a shred of evidence that marijuana's any worse than nicotine or alcohol. You can get cancer. Your liver can rot away.

FATHER: You rather look down on my generation for getting hung up on smoking and drinking, knowing it's bad for us. You think we're stupid. Maybe you're right. But does that make your generation so all-fired smart to get hung up on grass? You can be harmed by that too.

REINHARDT: Well, if the students in that class weren't asleep by now, they'd probably be on the floor laughing. Over half our high school students now identify themselves as marijuana users.

MERROW: Thirty-seven percent of the seniors have used it in the last month.

REINHARDT: Eleven percent -- that's one out of every nine seniors -- smoke pot every day.

MERROW: A lot of our kids already have a pretty good idea about pot.

NARRATOR: There are apparently few physical manifestations: a reddening of the eyes, lowered body temperature and a certain inability to coordinate movement. But there are other effects, psychological effects. The marijuana user generally experiences an uncontrollable feeling of hilarity, quite without reason. He exhibits a marked carelessness. His senses and time perception are distorted. He becomes confused, and he displays irresponsibility and poor judgment. And prolonged use may result in a loss of....

NIDA OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON DRUG EDUCATION MATERIALS

REINHARDT: We played that movie excerpt for the Associate Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, Robert Peterson.

PETERSON: Well, I think that we've got to recognize that some of the materials that are prepared with a view to drug prevention border on the ludicrous. I think one of the biggest dangers in dealing with youngsters is exaggerating or overstating the hazards of a drug. If you're going to stand there and tell youngsters that a single joint is going to lead to disaster, obviously they're not going to believe you, and with good reason, because it is simply probably not so. Of course we want to discourage alcohol and tobacco use, and obviously drugs such as PCP, or angel dust, and others that are quite hazardous. But it doesn't follow that we shouldn't discourage use of marijuana as well.

I think that we might also keep in mind that what we're trying to encourage, in a way, is the youngster to make judicious choices, to make wise choices that are likely to yield enduring satisfactions. Youngsters who are turned on by life are not as likely to get seriously turned on by drugs. And I don't think it's a matter of being utterly rigid and moralistic about it. It isn't a matter of saying "Oh, horrors" to the kid who smokes a single joint, or even an occasional joint. It's a matter of trying to discourage self-destructive behavior and recognizing that what may be relatively innocuous for one youngster may be quite a serious problem for another.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS: ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

SIMON: Hello, this is Carly Simon. Part of love is helping your brothers and sisters when they need you. Giving your friends strength is

a beautiful gift. Using hard drugs aren't going to help you find anything you don't already know about, anything positive, any way. There are too many beautiful experiences in life. Don't lose them. Please stop and think about it. Thank you.

REINHARDT: That's another approach to drug education, a public service announcement by a well-known person, most often a rock singer or a TV star.

MERROW: Do they work? That is, does advice from rock idols keep kids from using and abusing drugs? We posed that question to Judy Katz-Levy of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

KATZ-LEVY: Well, they're certainly not effective in changing behavior. But they probably do have an impact in gaining awareness. And if you look at it, there's a great body of literature related to effectiveness of media and how media can be used to change behavior. And the first step is gaining awareness. And if those PSAs are followed up by other types of community education, both in school and out of school, they can certainly play an important role. But they can't be expected to change behavior, as one isolated strategy.

MERROW: She used the phrase "changing behavior," which means getting kids who already use drugs to either stop or cut down.

REINHARDT: But some of the so-called educational thrusts are aimed at those who've never tried drugs.

TAYLOR: Hello out there. This is James Taylor. Sometimes it's hard not to get high, especially when everybody seems to be into it. You can tell yourself it's all right, you're just messing around. But it's easy to get in over your head. I used to get high. I don't any more. Maybe I outgrew it, or maybe I just wore it out. I don't know. But looking back it seems like an awful waste of time.

Perhaps you can benefit from my adventures and take some advice. Enjoy yourself, but be careful.

WHEN TO START DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MERROW: Maybe elementary school is not too soon to start a drug education program. A lot of kids we've been talking to they us they first tried drugs at 8 or 9.

REINHARDT: John Keating is a counselor in high school.

KEATING: I think if there's going to be effective drug education, it has to start not in the junior high; probably, nowadays, in the elementary school level. And it has to deal not just with information about what a drug can or can't do to your brain cells, but it has to start very much with the attitude of persons toward themselves, toward their parents, toward their peers, toward their school setting, and integrating the use of substances, whether they're drugs or alcohol, or any other substance, for that matter, into their life view and life scheme. I think here in the senior high we're caught doing some band-aid work when we deal with kids who have drug problems, how to somehow get through the situation they're in this moment.

REINHARDT: Not only are your efforts really kind of band-aid efforts, but also you can't really reach all the kids who have a likelihood of having a problem.

KEATING: Well, many kids have no more interest in speaking to a guidance counselor about this problem than they would speaking to their own

parents about the problem. In other words, we would be people for many of these youngsters, people to be avoided; people who are going to do nothing but somehow give you a bad time, attempt to step into your life style, something that you, the student, may be cherishing, actually, at this time, or it's the only thing you feel you have that makes your life real or worthwhile. And somehow the counselor, or anyone who would step into this situation and say "Halt, let's look" is not the desired person.

It usually comes at a time where a person is very, very badly, say, stumbling in their grades and they really see themselves as being a decent student. And this brings an awareness and they want to come and talk about something like this. Or maybe the backwash of an incident with the police. Or some traumatic experience at home where parents find drugs on them, on the student, and all of a sudden it becomes something that has to be talked over maybe in the context of a family problem, family-school-student problem that's just gotten beyond control. Or teachers referring students because they have glassy looks and strange smells, and that kind of thing.

But you're right. Many of these students we never see, or we see them only from afar. We know who they are, but they -- literally, a youngster can make himself or herself an untouchable by refusing to be touched.

MERROW: John Merrow, a Maryland high school guidance counselor.

REINHARDT: Mark Fromuth talked to some 5th graders, ten year-olds, in New Hampshire.

YOUNGSTER: My mother smokes a little bit. But I tell her not to, and she still does. She tells us not to, and then they go right ahead and do it.

YOUNGSTER: My mother and father say "Do as we say, not as we do."

YOUNGSTER: Yeah, that's what my mother says.

FROMUTH: Does it affect you? I mean, do you think you'll smoke, or you think you won't smoke, or does it make it a difficult decision for you to decide what you're going to do?

YOUNGSTER: It's a difficult decision because sometimes my father lets my brother take a puff or a drink of beer. And I hate beer. I took a sip and spit it out and got sick.

YOUNGSTER: It isn't that bad for you unless you drink a real lot of it. If you only drink a little bit of beer, I don't think that you should say, well, you're not supposed to drink beer, if they only drink a little bit.

FROMUTH: There was a policeman who came in, right...?

YOUNGSTER: Yes.

FROMUTH: ...And gave you a demonstration with all these....

YOUNGSTER: And marijuana really stinks. If you light it, it smells.

FROMUTH: Do you all remember what he did?

YOUNGSTER: He showed you how you hold a cigarette, a marijuana butt when it gets so far down. It's just a little thing, or something. That way you can get all of it so it won't be a waste of money, like.

YOUNGSTER: And you can tell when somebody's smoked marijuana because of

their fingerprints.

FROMUTH: So you don't think you'll smoke marijuana now.

YOUNGSTER: No.

YOUNGSTER: No.

YOUNGSTER: No.

FROMUTH: What else -- what else did he do? What else did he show you?

YOUNGSTER: Well, he showed us all of the barbiturates. Like, he had glass things, and it showed different kinds of capsules and everything. And it showed like -- it showed tobacco leaves and marijuana leaves too. And he had a bag of it. And one time he lit it, and the smoke smelled awful.

FROMUTH: Did you think it was serious or funny? Or what was your reaction to it?

YOUNGSTER: It was serious, definitely serious.

FROMUTH: Do you know of any friends that you have that have done any of this stuff?

YOUNGSTER: I do.

YOUNGSTER: I do.

YOUNGSTER: My nextdoor neighbor.

YOUNGSTER: He's 17 now. He doesn't do it any more. He smoked his last puff.

FROMUTH: He decided to quit?

YOUNGSTER: Yes. It was a cigarette, not marijuana.

FROMUTH: Uh-huh.

YOUNGSTER: My babysitter asked us if they could smoke. She asked us if we were going to tell on her, and we said yes, because I told her we had been studying about it and it was bad for you.

FROMUTH: So you find that when people are smoking cigarettes or marijuana or something, you say to them that, you know, you shouldn't be doing that, because of what you've learned.

YOUNGSTER: Well sometimes like when I see a kid smoking, I don't really want to say "You really shouldn't do that," because the kid could really just say, "Well, hey, this is my life; I can do what I want." He could just tell you to get out of here, because sometimes they don't even listen to you if you do tell them.

FROMUTH: The people that you know that have done it: have they ever -- have they ever said "Hey, do you want to smoke some of my cigarettes," or something like that?

YOUNGSTERS: No.

YOUNGSTER: Yes. But the kid I know....

YOUNGSTER: Yes, at least once.

FROMUTH: Did you try it?

YOUNGSTER: No.

FROMUTH: Do you think you will?

YOUNGSTER: No.

MERROW: Fifth graders in a Salem, New Hampshire drug education program.

THE NEED FOR CANDOR IN DRUG EDUCATION

REINHARDT: It's possible that after taking the course, they'll be able to recognize marijuana, will know how to roll a joint, how to inhale, and so forth; things they otherwise might not have learned for a few years.

MERROW: Drug education courses can and have led to earlier experimentation. How would you, as a parent, react if you thought your child's drug education course taught your kids about marijuana, for instance, before they'd ever seen a joint?

REINHARDT: Or what if you learned the teacher was, or had been, a drug user?

STUDENT: Well, I would say like the things on TV not to drink just make you want to drink even more because you're going against the system, and if people don't want you to, so you do it any way. That's a lot of the reasons why people do drugs, I would think. I would say the drug courses offered in this school don't really help you as much as most people think they do. Most of the people that have used drugs know -- you know, know like how to -- they're a little ahead of everybody else and they know what they're talking about, you know, and they know what part of the drugs is B.S. and what isn't. So it really depends. The drug courses: It depends on who's teaching them and if the teacher that is teaching them has ever used drugs, because then, that way, they get along with the students better, and the students....

MERROW: If they have used them.

STUDENT: Yeah, if they have used them, they get along better with the students, and the students -- then they learn, because, you know, the teacher, not only has he had the experience, but he also knows what he's talking about, you know. And then they listen and they learn, you know, to what he's saying.

MERROW: Here's a political problem for drug education teachers. Experts say marijuana is not nearly as harmful to kids as alcohol and PCP. Should they admit that to kids?

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup, the founder of NORML, would bite that political bullet. Drug education courses should be honest, he says, even if it means kids may smoke more marijuana.

STROUP: I think that the kids have been lied to for so long about marijuana, and not just the young kids today, but we were, my age, and people before me were. I'm afraid it's been going on for forty or fifty years in this country. It's very difficult for the institutions such as the schools and the churches and the families to deal unemotionally and objectively with subjects like marijuana. So even today, it's fairly common for schools to circulate articles about marijuana which are just blatantly exaggerated. The potential consequences of smoking are so unreal to the

students that they know from their own real life experiences. They've either tried a joint with friends at a Friday night party or they've got friends who have, or they've got older brothers and sisters, and they know it didn't have any great significance on their lives.

So I think the real problem with trying to discourage marijuana smoking by scaring kids is that there's no real basis to scare them. Now I'm not in favor of young kids using drugs of any kind. So I want to make that point clear. But neither am I in favor of scaring kids unless there's some reason to scare them.

MERROW: Okay. Let's design a Keith Stroup drug education program. What would you tell 15 year-olds?

STROUP: Well, I have a ten year old daughter, by the way, so it's the kind of thing I actually have to talk to her about already. She's never smoked marijuana, and she tells me, in fact, that most of the kids her age still have not experimented with drugs at school. But she's not unaware of it, obviously. I've smoked openly in front of her for years.

I would prefer that adolescents avoid recreational drug use altogether. I think that's a noble sort of goal to set.

MERROW: Adolescent meaning up to?

STROUP: Well, say, up to -- certainly up till age, say, 17. Prior to that, I think any drug use, other than just occasional experimental, recreational use, is going to complicate that maturation process that's difficult enough any way. There're a lot of changes we all have to go through during that adolescent phase. And if you have to deaden yourself out with any kind of drugs and if you don't learn to handle stress, and if you don't learn to handle the kinds of decision-making that you usually have to begin to deal with in adolescence, if your answer to all of that is simply to do drugs, you may find yourself going through adolescence when you're 20 or 25 or 30. And that's going to be even more difficult then.

I'm not one who tends to see things in apocalyptic terms. And in this case, I think mostly the government exaggerates the potential harm for political reasons at time. I mean there's always a politician willing and ready to run out and claim that drug use has gotten out of hand and if you'd only elect him, he'll take care of your problems. Well, how will he take care of your problems? Check it out two years later. Is drug use any lower because you elected him? No, of course not. The only difference is you may have elected some guy who looks to the criminal justice system to solve your problems. Well, the criminal justice system isn't equipped to solve this one.

So, no, I'm not particularly worried about what I see in the statistics today. I think we ought to continue to monitor it. And what we've got to do is to get more effective at dealing honestly with the kids about the potential for harm. Most of them don't want to hurt themselves. So if we give them good information, and if it's honest information, they'll believe us, at least in great numbers. But we can't expect them to believe us if we continue to preach morality and if we continue to say, look, alcohol and tobacco are legal; so they're okay. But these other drugs are illegal and they're immoral; well, kids don't buy that definition today, and they know from what they see that obviously alcohol and tobacco are not good drugs and shouldn't have been made legal in the first place.

MERROW: But it is your position that it's up to the kid to decide. And by kid, we're talking about 15, 16, 17 year-olds.

STROUP: Well, as much as I, as a parent, would like to make that

decision for my daughter, I'm afraid that that is not something that's within my power. She's going to experiment with marijuana whether I like it or not, because most kids do today during their teen years. And I don't think she'll be any different.

So I think that the ultimate decision will end up being that of the child, whether we want it to be or not. That's why we've got to begin, I think, to communicate honestly and build up some credibility with them, so that when we tell them PCP's dangerous, they know that we're telling the truth, that we're not trying to scare them. But to do that, we're going to have to be willing to admit that, just maybe, occasional marijuana use isn't so dangerous, and that, just maybe, we've been lying to them for a few years on that one.

REINHARDT: Keith Stroup, founder of an organization that wants marijuana legalized.

* * *

ZAPPA: Hello, folks. This is Frank Zappa here to suggest that you unload yourself. Don't use smack or downers.

* * *

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

OFFICER: If I had an arrow and I was going to point at what part of a child's life where the drug problem is or where it should be stopped, I would say the home.

MERROW: Okay. Well, give some advice. You know, be Ann Landers. What should a family do?

OFFICER: They've got to get a little closer together, I'd say. Families you see today: the mother works; the father works; they don't know where the kids are. They've got so many projects going. The families don't do things together any more. You're just going to have to restructure the family life. And that's not only for drugs. That's for a lot of things.

MERROW: A policeman from Wisconsin.

REINHARDT: That's a tall order, of course. We really can't wait around for families to change.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MERROW: But we took the question of honesty, how much to tell the kids, to Robert Peterson of the National Institute of Drug Abuse.

PETERSON: Well, that's a difficult problem. I think the problem of developing a decent drug education program is formidable. You're always faced with the danger of the program itself being, in some sense, seductive. You're in danger of exaggerating in such a way that it's more encouraging than discouraging of use. You're also in danger of getting overly caught up with the drugs, as such, rather than this question of developing a life style where drugs remain an unimportant part of existence. We, for example, sponsored a project on the West Coast in Berkeley called Project Community. And there what we provided for youngsters of high school age was a kind of locus, a place for their free time activity at which they could experience some of the things they were seeking through drugs by non-drug means -- meditation, modern dance, a whole range of techniques that enlisted the kids' interests and their energies in ways that felt good to them. Well,

use of drugs, including marijuana, dropped pretty dramatically. It wasn't completely eliminated, of course. And I think the problem with many social problems is one of reducing the social hazard that a problem poses rather than being absolutist about it. It isn't a matter of eliminating all drinking in some prohibitionist way. It's a matter of discouraging injudicious or self-destructive use of drugs.

REINHARDT: One thing is clear: we can't expect the schools by themselves to provide drug education for kids.

Why did you come tonight?

MAN: I came tonight because I have a son that I'm concerned about. And I want to make sure, if I can, that he does not get involved in drugs. And I'm interested in his future. And drugs could prevent him from having a good future.

REINHARDT: How old is he now?

MAN: He's sixteen.

REINHARDT: Do you have any idea whether he is involved in drugs?

MAN: From what I heard tonight, there's every possibility that he could fool me the same as other kids who are involved in drugs have been able to fool their parents. I'm no different; I can be fooled.

REINHARDT: It seems to me -- well, first of all, I think there were only about sixty people here, and probably about two-thirds of them were adults. And I would guess that those adults already know as much as any other adults in the community about drugs. Aren't they really reaching people who don't need to be reached?

MAN: I believe you're correct there, in that this is a problem with parents in general. Parents do not attend PTA meetings.

REINHARDT: Then how good is a drug education program like this?

MAN: It relays information to those who want to hear about it.

REINHARDT: What? Maybe one or two or three who don't already know it?

MAN: I think that every parent has heard about drugs, the same as every kid has heard about drugs. And it's whether or not the parent wants to find out whether there's something he's missing that he can use to help as far as his kid is concerned. I think the parents that were here were here because they were concerned about their own kids primarily.

REINHARDT: Is the school the best place for drug education programs like this?

MAN: Well, I really can't say. I think it has to be in the media. I don't think the school in itself can do it themselves, and it's not all their problem to educate the public about drugs. Their job is to educate the kids on becoming successful and getting an education.

* * *

SON: What it really does is expand your mind. It makes you see things more clearly. It makes you more creative. Really, it does. All the painters and writers: they all say so.

FATHER: They only think they create better things.

SON: Yeah, maybe they do.

FATHER: Any way, Tom, it is illegal. Every time you blow a marijuana cigarette you take a chance on blowing your future.

SON: Oh, come on, Pop. All my friends smoke pot. They're not criminals.

FATHER: Only because they haven't been caught yet./

MERROW: If you missed any of the first five parts of this special series on drugs and kids, you might want the complete transcript. It's available for three dollars.

REINHARDT: The cassette recordings cost fifteen dollars.

MERROW: And we have a schedule of past and future OPTIONS IN EDUCATION programs free.

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MERROW: And please tell us the call letters of your own local NPR station when you write.

* * *

NARRATOR: Marijuana: cannabis or Indian hemp, weed, grass, pot. It can become a stimulant or a depressive or an hallucinatory agent which affects the central nervous system and reacts differently and unpredictably on each individual user, occasionally with disastrous results.

REINHARDT: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University.

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I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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